

Welcome to This Week's Asia on the Horizon

(30 JUNE 2025)

This week's edition comes at a time of remarkable geopolitical flux, as Asia and its partners navigate a landscape shaped by mounting security concerns, strategic recalibrations, and intensified diplomatic engagement. From the corridors of Summer Davos in Tianjin to the defense summit halls of Qingdao, the region is brimming with dialogue on how to manage growing uncertainty in a multipolar world.

The lead stories reflect Asia's expanding diplomatic bandwidth. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's urgent call for de-escalation amid the Iran-Israel crisis underscores India's balancing act between energy security and principled diplomacy. Meanwhile, Japan's unexpected retreat from the NATO summit highlights discontent within the Indo-Pacific Quartet and suggests shifting fault lines in transatlantic engagement.

Economic and strategic partnerships remain central. As Eurasian Resources Group pushes Kazakhstan into the gallium supply chain, and Singapore strengthens ties with China to weather global volatility, these moves reflect the growing weight of middle powers in redefining global supply networks and regional resilience. Thailand's escalating border tensions with Cambodia, on the other hand, are a stark reminder that local flashpoints continue to reverberate through national politics and regional stability.

The 2025 Summer Davos serves as a thematic centerpiece of this issue—both in content and symbolism. With over 1,800 participants from 90+ countries, the forum has evolved from a business event into a diplomatic arena for the Global South. Chinese Premier Li Qiang's messages on resisting the politicization of trade and championing inclusive globalization found resonance among leaders from Vietnam, Ecuador, Senegal, and beyond. The forum's undercurrent of South–South solidarity, strategic connectivity, and tech-driven diplomacy reflects the region's search for alternative models of cooperation amidst great power rivalry.

We also spotlight the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's Defense Ministers' Meeting, where unity was on display—but discord was evident, particularly in India's refusal to endorse the final declaration. This tension exemplifies the challenges of maintaining consensus in a bloc where strategic competition and historical grievances simmer beneath the surface.

Finally, our curated statistics, map, photo, and infographic of the week enrich this narrative, capturing China's surging electricity output, the UK's maritime soft power in Asia, and the strategic subtext of regional summits.



1. KEY DEVELOPMENTS

India-Iran Hotline: Modi Urges De-escalation Amid Middle East Tensions

In a timely diplomatic move on June 22, 2025, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a phone call from Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, who provided an update on the unfolding Israel-Iran conflict. The conversation took place just days after U.S. airstrikes struck Iran's nuclear facilities, raising global alarm over regional stability. Modi expressed India's deep concern over the developments, calling for "immediate de-escalation, dialogue, and diplomacy". He reaffirmed India's consistent stance on supporting the early restoration of peace, security, and stability in the region—an approach reflecting New Delhi's broader strategy of balancing ties with diverse Middle Eastern partners while promoting calm.

The phone call also came as India reassures its domestic audience of the country's resilience in the face of potential fuel market shocks resulting from heightened tensions in the Strait of Hormuz. Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri announced measures to secure fuel supply, including diversified sourcing and stockpiles covering several weeks. Modi's conversation with President Pezeshkian thus serves a dual purpose: diplomatically signaling India's active engagement in de-escalation efforts, while reaffirming its commitment to energy security amid regional volatility.

Japan's Ishiba Pulls Out of NATO Summit Amid IP4 Frustration

On June 23, 2025, Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba unexpectedly canceled his scheduled visit to the NATO summit in The Hague, set to occur June 24–26, citing "various circumstances" according to the Foreign Ministry. This decision came just three days after his attendance was confirmed, and was reportedly driven by the low likelihood of a meeting between NATO and the IP4 (Indo-Pacific quartet of Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand) as well as the improbability of a face-to-face with U.S. President Donald Trump. Notably, Japan's former consistent leadership presence at NATO summits—initiated in 2022 as a response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine—has been broken, with Ishiba stepping back while Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya will now helm Japan's representation at the event.

Ishiba's withdrawal may signal deeper strategic recalibration in Japan's global posture. His intended participation aimed to underscore the inseparability of security between the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions. The absence of top-level engagement from Japan, South Korea, and Australia could reflect frustrations over a lack of concrete IP4 coordination with NATO and unresolved bilateral dynamics with the U.S.—especially amid growing tension over defense contributions and Middle East pressures. With Iwaya leading the delegation, Japan aims to sustain its diplomatic footprint in The Hague, although the symbolic weight is undeniably diminished, underscoring challenges in bridging multiregional security architectures.

Ishiba's NATO No-Show Highlights Strains in U.S.–Japan Strategic Relations

On June 23, 2025, Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba announced he would skip the upcoming NATO summit in The Hague (June 24–26), citing vague "various circumstances" by Japan's Foreign Ministry. While Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya will attend, the absence of Ishiba—along with South Korea's and Australia's leaders—signals dissatisfaction with the summit's agenda, particularly the lack of NATO–IP4 engagement (covering Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand) and the low probability of a meeting with U.S. President Trump.

Analysts interpret Ishiba's decision as more than a scheduling adjustment—it reflects deepening acrimony in the U.S.–Japan partnership. According to Nikkei Asia, this is one of several recent signals of discord, especially as Washington pressures Tokyo to ramp up defence spending to as high as 3.5–5% of GDP, demands that have sparked internal political backlash. The skipped NATO summit, alongside the postponement of the key "2+2" security meetings, underscores a growing strategic recalibration in Tokyo and unease about alliance expectations—reshaping the contours of trans-Pacific security cooperation.

South Korea Appoints First Civilian Defense Minister in 64 Years

On June 23, 2025, President Lee Jae Myung nominated veteran liberal lawmaker Ahn Gyu-back as South Korea's new defense minister—the first civilian to hold the post since 1961—fulfilling a key campaign promise in the wake of December's attempted martial law under former President Yoon Suk Yeol, who is now facing insurrection charges. Ahn, a five-term member of the National Assembly and former head of its defense committee, played a leading role in investigating the martial law crisis. His appointment symbolizes a decisive shift to civilian oversight of the military, reinforcing democratic accountability and public trust in national defense institutions.

President Lee simultaneously nominated a strategic lineup of ten additional ministers, including Cho Hyun, former UN ambassador, as foreign minister, and Chung Dong-young—an experienced North Korea diplomat—as unification minister. These nominations mark the solidification of a new administration focused on bridging domestic divisions and advancing pragmatic diplomacy to support South Korea's export-heavy economy in the face of U.S. tariffs. The selections, subject to legislative hearings, aim to reinforce civilian control, economic resilience, and diplomatic engagement during a pivotal period of political and geopolitical transformation.

Kazakhstan to Join Gallium Mining Race with ERG's \$20M Push

Eurasian Resources Group (ERG) is set to invest \$20 million in a new project to extract gallium—a critical mineral used in semiconductors, radar systems, and missile guidance—from its bauxite-processing alumina operations in Kazakhstan, with production scheduled to begin in 2026. If successful, this would position Kazakhstan as the world's second-largest gallium producer after China, with ERG aiming to supply up to 15 metric tons annually to OECD nations.

This move marks a strategic pivot in the global supply chain, reducing dependence on Chinese output. Last year, China dominated global gallium production (about 760 t) and recently imposed export restrictions—stemming from U.S.–China tech tensions—which highlighted vulnerabilities in critical mineral access. ERG's initiative not only strengthens Kazakhstan's role in this key market, but also aligns with broader geopolitical efforts by the U.S. and EU to diversify sources of essential materials.

Doval in Beijing: India Pushes China for Unified Counter-Terrorism Action

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing on June 23, 2025, during the SCO Security Council Secretaries meeting. He delivered a firm message urging Beijing to join India in countering cross-border terrorism and dismantling terror infrastructure—especially in response to the April Pahalgam attack and May military standoff with Pakistan. The MEA's readout stressed both officials reviewed the state of India–China ties and reinforced their commitment to boosting people-to-people exchanges and overall bilateral cooperation.

Doval also called on SCO members to reject “double standards” in fighting terrorism and to coordinate information operations targeting extremist groups such as LeT and JeM. His remarks, seen as a veiled admonishment of Pakistan, reflect India's broader strategy of rallying SCO partners to hold terrorist sponsors and financiers accountable, uphold regional stability, and pressure China to leverage its influence within the bloc.

Singapore–China Ties Deepen Amid Global Disruptions

During his official visit to Beijing from June 22 to 26, 2025, Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong emphasized to President Xi Jinping that Singapore–China relations are "more important than before" amid rising geopolitical and economic turmoil. Wong, choosing China as the first country to visit outside Southeast Asia since taking office, stressed the need for closer collaboration through regional and multilateral channels to uphold a rules-based global order and vibrant free trade—a critical lifeline for Singapore's trade-dependent economy.

Xi echoed the sentiment, affirming China's readiness to deepen strategic cooperation and jointly navigate today's turbulent world, urging morale against hegemonic tendencies. Their discussions, held at Beijing's Great Hall of the People, also reaffirmed commitments made during the 35th anniversary of diplomatic ties—leaning on historical bonds dating back to Deng Xiaoping and Lee Kuan Yew. As Wong prepares to attend the Tianjin "Summer Davos," his strengthened engagement with China signals Singapore's balanced diplomacy, aiming to bolster economic security and resilience despite escalating U.S.–China strategic tensions.

Thailand Shuts Border with Cambodia Amid Escalating Clash Fallout

On June 24, 2025, the Thai military announced the closure of nearly all land border checkpoints across seven provinces along the Cambodian frontier—including Ubon Ratchathani, Surin, Sa Kaeo, Chanthaburi, Trat, Sisaket, and Buriram—to all tourists and traders, except those in humanitarian categories such as medical patients and students. This move follows a deadly skirmish in late May that resulted in the death of a Cambodian soldier, triggering a series of reciprocal sanctions: Cambodia halted imports of Thai fuel, gas, fruit, vegetables, and even Thai internet services, while Thailand acted to cut electricity supplies to regions sheltering scam operations and alleged illegal "scam" centers. Bangkok's justification underlined security concerns and an intensified crackdown on cross-border cybercrime.

Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra has faced mounting criticism over the handling of the border crisis—especially after a leaked phone conversation with former Cambodian leader Hun Sen, in which she reportedly criticized a senior Thai military official. The political fallout has been swift: a key coalition partner, the Bhumjaithai Party, withdrew, forcing a cabinet reshuffle and triggering legal scrutiny. Popular protests have also emerged, with Bangkok demonstrators urging stronger leadership as the economy—particularly border trade and tourism—is heavily disrupted. Reflecting the enduring nationalist undercurrents, this crisis spotlights how historical territorial tensions—in the spirit of the 1962 ICJ ruling over Preah Vihear and recurrent flare-ups—still shape Southeast Asian geopolitics.

Summer Davos 2025: AI & Trade Take Center Stage on Opening Day

On Day 1 of the Annual Meeting of the New Champions (Summer Davos) in Tianjin, over 1,700 leaders from business, government, and academia convened to explore how entrepreneurship and innovation can navigate the complex geopolitical and economic landscape. Key themes emerged around the transformative potential of AI, evolving global trade dynamics, and the critical role of labor markets in shaping future economic resilience. In sessions emphasizing trade, experts like Valentino Valentini highlighted that "there are no winners in a trade war," stressing the importance of balanced dialogue and partnerships over protectionist measures. Meanwhile, AI discussions spotlighted workplace inclusivity and labor market shifts, with Workera CEO projecting that AI could flatten workforce hierarchies—and underscoring the need for targeted upskilling, especially for women in Africa.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang opened the forum with a message of pragmatic optimism, drawing parallels to the 2008 financial crisis and presenting China as a cornerstone of global stability en route to becoming a "mega-consumer market." He affirmed that globalization remains irreversible, warned against supply-chain fragmentation, and pledged enhanced openness in trade and technology—backed by moves to share AI developments and support a more multipolar currency system. Despite a lighter Western presence, with no U.S. government officials attending, multinational firms voiced strong intent to deepen engagement in China—reflecting a growing confidence in its role as a global hub.

China's Li Qiang: Don't Politicize Global Trade

At Tianjin's Summer Davos on June 25, 2025, Chinese Premier Li Qiang delivered a robust appeal to global business leaders: "not to turn trade into a political or security issue." He emphasized that economic globalization must be defended against protectionist pressures and "fragmentation of supply chains". Highlighting China's evolving role—from being a major manufacturer to becoming a "mega-consumer market"—Li cautioned that treating trade as a geopolitical tool undermines mutual prosperity and disrupts industrial stability.

He urged international entrepreneurs to act responsibly—favoring openness, cooperation, and shared growth over bilateral tensions or "de-risking" strategies. This reaffirmed China's broader message at the forum: globalization is irreversible, and collective dialogue—not unilateral policies—must underpin the future of trade.

Vietnam–China Summit: Pham Minh Chinh and Li Qiang Reinforce Strategic Partnership

On June 24, 2025, Vietnamese Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính and Chinese Premier Li Qiang met on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum’s “Summer Davos” to solidify their nations’ strategic cooperation. Both leaders underscored the critical importance of their bilateral relationship—describing it as a cornerstone of Vietnam’s foreign policy—and pledged to turn high-level agreements into tangible outcomes across key sectors including infrastructure, trade, innovation, and connectivity. Li expressed readiness to assist Vietnam with concessional loans and technology transfers for railway projects while committing to expand Chinese imports of Vietnamese agricultural products and deepen cooperation in AI, digital economy, and green development.

Pham Minh Chính reciprocated by emphasizing Vietnam’s ongoing reforms and its confidence in China’s rising global influence. He proposed enhancing security and defense coordination, including through strategic dialogues and joint maritime patrols, as well as synchronizing infrastructure development and Customs procedures to foster smoother cross-border commerce and integrated supply chains. Both sides also reaffirmed their commitment to peacefully resolving maritime disputes and jointly pursuing a binding Code of Conduct in the East Sea under UNCLOS principles.

UK’s HMS Prince of Wales Anchors Soft-Power Diplomacy in Singapore

On June 23, 2025, the Royal Navy’s flagship, HMS Prince of Wales, docked at Singapore’s Marina Bay Cruise Centre—marking the first-ever aircraft carrier visit to this civilian terminal during an Indo-Pacific deployment under Operation Highmast. The arrival was greeted with fanfare: Royal Marines’ band performances, crowds of children waving British and Singaporean flags, and dignitaries underscoring the event’s significance for maritime diplomacy.

The carrier, part of a task force featuring five core ships, 24 jets, and 17 helicopters, is hosting a wide range of events onboard—ranging from a “defence and security industry day” to an e-sports tournament involving UK and Singapore military personnel. Highlighting London’s “generational mission” in the Indo-Pacific, British officials framed the visit as a demonstration of long-term commitment to regional stability, free navigation, and deepened defence, trade, and tech collaboration. The choice of a civilian cruise terminal over a naval base underscored a strategic blend of visibility and soft-power outreach aimed at broadening public and industrial ties.

China Advocates Political Resolution to Ukraine Crisis, Protects Journalists Abroad

At their June 26, 2025, press briefing, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun reaffirmed China's diplomatic stance on Ukraine, calling for a political settlement and urging all parties to de-escalate tensions through dialogue rather than force. He underscored Beijing's support for a negotiated outcome, emphasizing the need to prevent further military escalation. In the same briefing, he expressed concern for the safety of a Chinese journalist injured by a Ukrainian drone in Russia, using the incident to reinforce China's appeal for restraint and civilian protection amid broader conflicts.

Also on June 26, China announced another high-level diplomatic move: Foreign Minister Wang Yi will visit Brussels, Germany, and France from June 30 to July 6 to co-chair strategic dialogue sessions with the EU, Germany, and France. The visits, during the 50th anniversary of China–EU ties, aim to deepen cooperation, align on global challenges, and strengthen frameworks supporting multilateralism, trade, and international stability. These engagements signal Beijing's push to anchor its global role through sustained strategic diplomacy with major Western partners.

SCO Defense Ministers Convene in Qingdao: Collective Security Amid Turbulence

China hosted the two-day meeting of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) defense ministers in Qingdao, with Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun chairing the opening session aboard a Chinese destroyer. He urged member states to counter “unilateralism, protectionism, and hegemonic behavior,” positioning the SCO as “a stabilizing anchor amid chaos and change,” and reaffirmed China's intent to deepen pragmatic military cooperation under the enduring “Shanghai Spirit”.

India's Defense Minister Rajnath Singh attended alongside counterparts from China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan, and Central Asia, marking the first India-China defense ministerial face-to-face since the recent border standoff. However, India notably refused to endorse the final joint declaration, protesting the absence of strong anti-terror language—an objection reportedly blocked by “one particular country”. This diplomatic tension underscores persistent friction within the SCO over consensus on counter-terror priorities.

India Snubs SCO Declaration Over Terror References

At the June 26 SCO defense ministers' meeting in Qingdao, India balked at signing the joint communique because it lacked explicit mention of terrorism, particularly referring to the April 22 Pahalgam attack that killed 26 civilians—an incident India attributes to Pakistan-backed militants. Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh highlighted the inconsistency, stating there's "no place for double standards" and urging SCO nations to hold states that sponsor or shelter terrorists accountable. This marked a rare and pointed rebuke within the China-led grouping, demonstrating New Delhi's zero-tolerance stance and willingness to press for tougher language on terrorism.

India's refusal carries deeper weight: it disrupted consensus within the ten-nation SCO, signaling frustration with what it perceives as China and Pakistan's reluctance to firmly address cross-border terror. It comes amid broader regional tensions—such as 'Operation Sindoor,' India's military response to the Pahalgam attack, and ongoing standoffs along the Pakistan frontier. The move underscores India's strategy of leveraging multilateral forums to spotlight security threats while maintaining diplomatic engagement, even with geopolitical rivals, in pursuit of accountability and regional stability.

Xi and Noboa Sign Belt and Road Deal in Strategic Beijing Summit

On June 27, 2025, Chinese President Xi Jinping hosted Ecuador's President Daniel Noboa at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, marking a significant step in China-Latin America relations. The meeting commemorated the 45th anniversary of their diplomatic ties and witnessed the signing of a comprehensive cooperation plan under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This deal builds on their existing free trade agreement and sets the stage for collaboration across energy, mining, power, infrastructure, science, culture, education, and youth exchanges—reinforcing China's strategic, long-term engagement in Ecuador and the broader Latin American region.

For President Noboa—who traveled to China after attending the Summer Davos in Tianjin—the visit underscores his commitment to diversifying Ecuador's international partnerships. As the youngest head of state in the country's history, Noboa has stated that "Ecuador looks forward to deepening relations with China and increasing cooperation in trade, science and technology, culture, education and youth". This high-profile summit not only highlights China's outreach to the Global South, as reflected in parallel meetings like that with Senegal's prime minister, but also signals Beijing's ambitions to cement its role as a global development leader.

Xi Meets Senegal's PM Sonko, Pledges Deeper China-Africa Partnership

On June 27, 2025, Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Senegalese Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko in Beijing, reaffirming the strength of China–Senegal ties and broader China–Africa cooperation. The meeting, held on the sidelines of the Summer Davos Forum, built on the momentum from the 2024 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), co-chaired by Xi and Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye. Xi described China and Senegal as “good brothers” committed to independent development, political trust, and solidarity across the Global South.

Xi pledged support for Senegal’s infrastructure ambitions, urging Chinese companies to invest in new energy and digital development projects. He also emphasized cultural and people-to-people exchanges ahead of the 2026 China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges. In response, Sonko praised China as a “reliable partner” and reaffirmed Senegal’s commitment to the One-China principle, expressing interest in expanding Belt and Road cooperation and coordinating with China on global governance to uphold the common interests of developing nations.

Trump Announces U.S.–China Trade Deal to Expedite Rare-Earth Exports

On June 26, 2025 (Wednesday), U.S. President Donald Trump declared that the United States and China had signed an agreement related to trade, centered on streamlining the export of rare-earth minerals and magnets from China to the U.S. This deal revives and formalizes terms from earlier diplomatic frameworks in Geneva and London. While Trump and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick confirmed the agreement, they underscored that details remain limited, though U.S. automakers will receive priority licenses under the new arrangement.

The pact is being hailed as a step toward cooling bilateral trade tensions, with China’s Commerce Ministry affirming that export requests will now follow confirmed legal procedures. The announcement was met with enthusiastic global market responses—U.S. stock benchmarks surged, with the S&P 500 and Nasdaq hitting record highs on optimism over the deal. However, experts caution that underlying trade disputes, including tariffs and broader negotiations, remain unresolved, making this more a truce than a comprehensive resolution.

China–EU 50th Anniversary Talks Emphasize Mutual Respect and Strategic Stability

On June 25, 2025, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with diplomatic envoys from the European Union and its member states in Beijing to commemorate the 50th anniversary of China–EU diplomatic relations. Framing China and the EU as “major constructive forces” in today’s world, Wang called for enhanced mutual trust and deeper cooperation. He emphasized three core principles: upholding mutual respect (with strong reaffirmation of the One-China principle and rejection of “Taiwan independence” in any form), preserving the cooperative nature of the China–EU partnership (not as rivals or adversaries), and adhering to true multilateralism grounded in international law and UN principles.

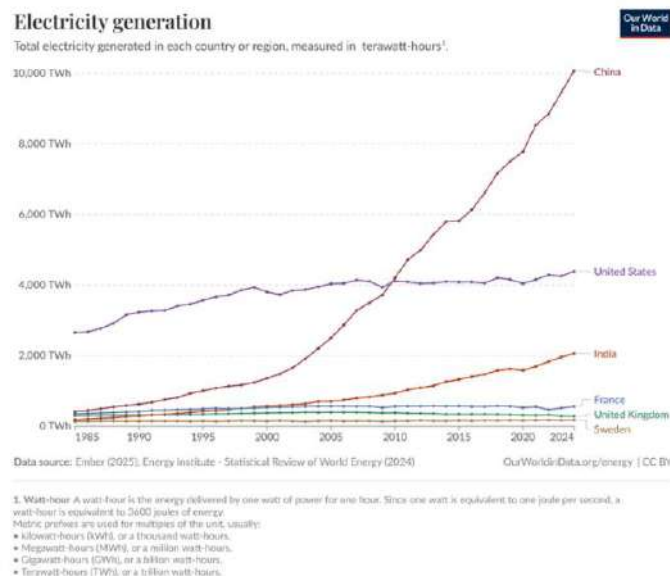
Wang further tied the meeting’s themes to China’s global initiatives—including the Belt and Road, Global Development Initiative, and the vision of a shared future for humanity—positioning them as China’s contributions to global governance. In response, EU envoys acknowledged China’s continued strategic importance and expressed readiness to advance a constructive, stable relationship, partner on multilateral issues, and jointly address global challenges. The meeting reflected cautious optimism amid growing divergences over trade, technology, and geopolitics, but also a shared desire to stabilize and elevate the China–EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

2. STATISTICS OF THE WEEK

China Powers Ahead in Global Electricity Generation

New data from the Energy Institute's Statistical Review of World Energy 2024 underscores a striking shift in global electricity generation. China now generates over 10,000 TWh of electricity annually, more than double that of the United States, which has plateaued around 4,000 TWh since the mid-2000s. This marks an extraordinary rise from just 1,000 TWh in the early 1990s—a tenfold increase in three decades.

Meanwhile, India has steadily climbed to over 2,000 TWh, showing robust growth but still far behind the world's top two producers. European countries such as France, the UK, and Sweden maintain relatively stable generation levels, each producing well under 1,000 TWh. These trajectories reflect not only rising energy demand in Asia but also broader industrial, technological, and climate policy dynamics reshaping the global energy landscape.



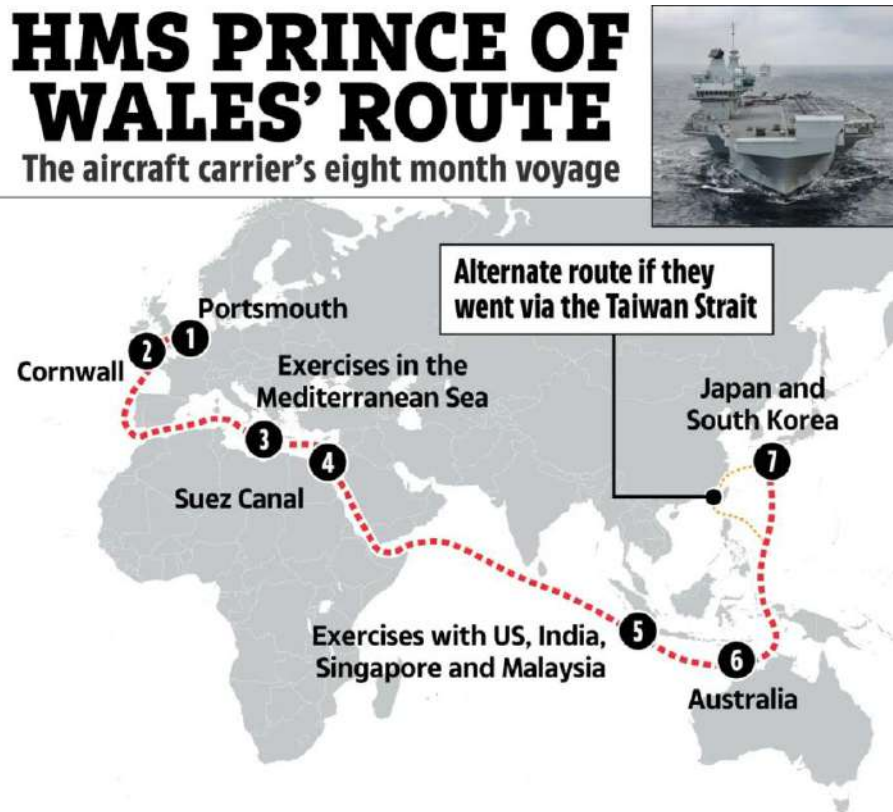
<https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/electricity-generation?tab=chart&country=SWE~IND~USA~GBR~FRA~CHN>

3. MAP OF THE WEEK

UK's HMS Prince of Wales Charts Strategic Indo-Pacific Course

This week's map traces the eight-month voyage of the Royal Navy's flagship aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales, which embarked from Portsmouth and passed through the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, and into the Indo-Pacific via exercises with the U.S., India, Singapore, and Malaysia, before reaching Australia, and eventually Japan and South Korea.

Notably, the route deliberately avoids the Taiwan Strait, highlighting growing maritime sensitivities and strategic caution in contested waters. The map includes an "alternate route" that the carrier chose not to take—via the Strait—a subtle geopolitical signal amid rising China–UK tensions over freedom of navigation. The ship's civilian docking in Singapore further reflects a blend of military deterrence and soft-power outreach, reinforcing the UK's "generational mission" to deepen regional partnerships and uphold a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.



<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/34580407/warship-china-sail-taiwan-strait/>

4. PHOTO OF THE WEEK

Defense Diplomacy on Display: SCO Ministers Gather in Qingdao

This week's photo captures a defining moment in regional security cooperation: the Defense Ministers' Meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), held in Qingdao, China on June 26, 2025. Chaired by Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun, the summit brought together military leaders from member states including China, India, Russia, Iran, Pakistan, and Central Asian republics, underscoring the SCO's role as a strategic security bloc amid a turbulent global order.

The image reflects both cooperation and underlying tensions—particularly as India declined to sign the joint declaration over the absence of strong anti-terror language. The meeting emphasized the "Shanghai Spirit" of mutual respect and non-alignment, but also highlighted divisions on key security priorities. As regional fault lines deepen, this summit reveals the complex balance of dialogue, deterrence, and diplomacy shaping Asia's evolving security architecture.



<https://news.cgtn.com/news/2025-06-26/SCO-defense-ministers-meeting-held-in-China-1EwzCpkOeOs/p.html>

5. INFOGRAPHIC OF THE WEEK

Summer Davos 2025: China Champions Globalization Amid Uncertainty

This week's featured infographic spotlights the Summer Davos 2025 (Annual Meeting of the New Champions), held in Tianjin from June 24–26, drawing over 1,800 global participants from 90+ countries. With the theme “Entrepreneurship for a New Era,” the forum explored the global economic outlook, industrial transformation, sustainability, and innovation in energy and materials. High-level attendees included leaders from Singapore, Vietnam, Ecuador, Kyrgyzstan, and Senegal, alongside global business pioneers.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang's keynote message set the tone, asserting that “globalization will not be reversed” and cautioning against politicizing trade. He reaffirmed Beijing's ambition to transform China into a mega-consumer hub and play a greater role in international governance. Tianjin, hosting the event for the eighth time, served as a showcase for China's tech-driven diplomacy, R&D platforms, and innovation-oriented economic strategy. The infographic encapsulates how the forum positioned China as both a pillar of stability and a driver of inclusive global growth.



6. REGIONAL ALLIANCES

The SCO in Qingdao: Strategic Unity Amid Diverging Security Priorities

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) convened its annual Defense Ministers' Meeting on June 26, 2025, in Qingdao, China, bringing together military chiefs and senior defense officials from its ten member states. The event—hosted by Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun—served as a platform for reaffirming multilateral defense cooperation in a shifting security landscape marked by geopolitical fragmentation, regional crises, and contested visions of global order.

A Forum for Military Dialogue

The SCO, founded in 2001, includes China, India, Russia, Pakistan, and four Central Asian states—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan—as full members, with Iran joining recently. As a Eurasian multilateral organization, it aims to promote regional stability, counterterrorism cooperation, and trust-building through political, economic, and military collaboration. In Qingdao, defense ministers reaffirmed the need to uphold the “Shanghai Spirit”—a doctrine emphasizing mutual respect, non-interference, and cooperative security.

China, the summit host, called for deeper military-to-military engagement within the bloc. Defense Minister Dong Jun warned against the rise of “unilateralism, protectionism, and hegemonic behavior,” presenting the SCO as a stabilizing force amid global disorder. His remarks echoed Beijing’s wider strategic messaging: that multilateral institutions rooted in the Global South can serve as credible alternatives to Western-led alliances.

Fractures Behind Closed Doors

While the meeting demonstrated surface-level unity, significant divergences emerged—most notably when India declined to sign the final joint declaration. Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh cited the absence of clear language condemning terrorism, particularly in the wake of the April 2025 Pahalgam terror attack, which India attributes to Pakistan-backed militants. New Delhi expressed dissatisfaction with what it described as “double standards” on counterterrorism, and reportedly objected to the exclusion of terms specifically addressing state-sponsored terrorism.

This rejection marked a rare disruption in an otherwise consensus-based forum. Analysts suggest India’s stance signals a firmer regional posture amid broader tensions with both China and Pakistan, and a push to shape multilateral norms in line with its own national security imperatives. The disagreement also reflected the challenges of balancing sovereignty with solidarity in a diverse organization encompassing both rivals and strategic competitors.

A Platform in Transition

Despite the controversy, the SCO summit highlighted the organization's growing importance in facilitating military diplomacy and non-Western security cooperation. The inclusion of new members like Iran, and observer participation from countries such as Belarus, signals the bloc's ambition to evolve beyond Central Asia into a more expansive Eurasian framework. However, the Qingdao summit also underscored the limits of consensus-building within the SCO, especially on contentious issues like terrorism, border disputes, and external alignments.

Conclusion: Between Unity and Discord

The 2025 SCO Defense Ministers' Meeting reflects both the strength and strain of regional alliances in an increasingly multipolar world. While the bloc provides a platform for military engagement and strategic signaling, internal differences—particularly between India, China, and Pakistan—highlight the fragile balance between regional cooperation and national interest. As the SCO expands its membership and agenda, its ability to act cohesively on key security issues will be critical in determining its role as a credible force for stability in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

7. ANALYSIS

Summer Davos 2025: A Platform for South–South Cooperation and Multipolar Engagement

The Annual Meeting of the New Champions 2025, commonly known as Summer Davos, took place in Tianjin, China, from June 24 to 26, 2025, amid heightened geopolitical uncertainty and economic fragmentation. With over 1,800 participants from 90+ countries, this year's theme, "Entrepreneurship for a New Era," provided a critical platform for Global South diplomacy, regional collaboration, and policy exchange on issues such as sustainable growth, industrial transformation, and trade governance.

While traditionally an economic forum, Summer Davos has evolved into a strategic space for regional and interregional engagement, particularly as Global South countries seek to recalibrate their positions within an increasingly multipolar world order. The 2025 edition featured prominent leaders from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eurasia, reflecting a shared interest in building resilience through south–south cooperation and advancing alternative models of globalization.

China's Diplomatic Signaling

Chinese Premier Li Qiang used the opening address to reaffirm Beijing's commitment to open markets, multilateralism, and global economic governance. His declaration that "globalization will not be reversed" and that "trade should not be turned into a political or security issue" positioned China as a counterweight to rising protectionist and unilateral tendencies. The statement resonated with many attending Global South leaders, who view China as a key advocate for non-Western development narratives and institutional reform.

Li also emphasized China's goal of becoming a mega-consumption hub and outlined plans to attract investment in new energy, smart manufacturing, and digital infrastructure. These messages were directed not only at the domestic business community but also at regional partners seeking greater economic interdependence with China, particularly those along the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) corridors.

Strengthening South–South and Interregional Dialogues

The summit facilitated bilateral and multilateral meetings on the sidelines, many of which highlighted the emerging convergence of priorities among Global South economies. For example, Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Senegalese Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko, reinforcing the China–Africa strategic partnership through investment pledges, political trust, and plans for enhanced cultural diplomacy ahead of the 2026 China–Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges.

Similarly, Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa's presence at both the forum and a subsequent summit in Beijing underscored Latin America's deepening engagement with China. His signing of a cooperation plan under the BRI reflects a broader regional

interest in diversifying global partnerships and accessing China-led finance and infrastructure initiatives.

Leaders from Singapore, Vietnam, Kyrgyzstan, and others also used the event to voice support for inclusive globalization, regional innovation, and sustainable development. These converging themes illustrated how Summer Davos serves as an ecosystem for cross-regional connectivity, blending economics with diplomacy.

Evolving into a Hub for Strategic Economic Diplomacy

Although Summer Davos is branded as a business forum, its increasing emphasis on geopolitical and regional dynamics indicates a broadening of its role. Unlike more security-oriented summits like the Shangri-La Dialogue or SCO Defense Meetings, Summer Davos allows leaders to advance soft power, economic diplomacy, and strategic narratives without overtly political framing. This makes it especially attractive to states navigating between competing power blocs.

However, questions remain about the depth and durability of the alliances it nurtures. While the forum promotes dialogue and partnership, the actualization of joint projects and institutional reforms depends on longer-term political alignment and economic capacity.

Conclusion: From Economic Forum to Diplomatic Arena

Summer Davos 2025 reinforced its status as more than a business event—it has become a regional alliance incubator and a diplomatic convergence zone. By offering a neutral yet strategically framed space for engagement, the forum enables emerging economies to assert agency, build coalitions, and shape the global agenda on their own terms. In a time of fragmented multilateralism and contested globalization, Tianjin's forum offered a glimpse into how the Global South is recalibrating its strategies through regional collaboration and multipolar engagement.