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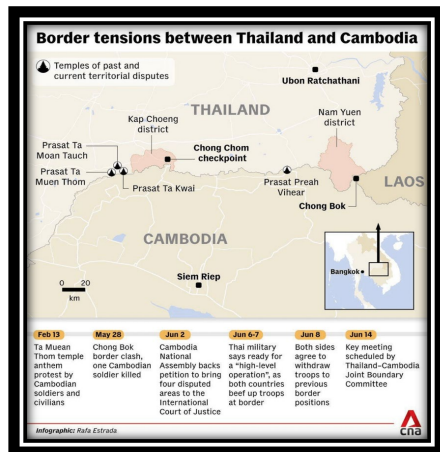
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Thailand- Cambodia Border Battle- Tenuous Ceasefire Takes Hold

On 28 Jul 2025, a tenuous ceasefire came into effect between Thailand and Cambodia's border conflict after efforts by Malaysia, chair of the ASEAN regional bloc, the United States, and China to bring both sides to the negotiating table. Leaders from Thailand and Cambodia agreed during talks in Putrajaya to end hostilities, resume direct communications, and create a mechanism to implement the ceasefire. Despite mutual accusations of violations from both sides, fragile peace has held thus far in the deadliest conflict in more than a decade between the two Southeast Asian Neighbours.



The current conflict began on 28 May 2025 when a brief clash between Thai and Cambodian troops caused the death of a Cambodian soldier in the contested border area of the Emerald Triangle. Since then, Cambodia-Thailand relations have been at their lowest point since the dispute over Preah Vihear temple from 2008 to 2011.

While tension along the border remained high, diplomatic relations declined rapidly, with the imposition of trade restrictions, border controls, and other tit-for-tat measures. Furthermore, Prime

Minister Hun Manet in early June announced plans to bring the issue to the ICJ, requesting that it rule on the Chong Bok area as well as the areas adjacent to the Ta Moan Thom, Ta Moan Toch, and Ta Krabei temples. Phnom Penh's unilateral decision to approach the ICJ, a body whose jurisdiction Thailand does not recognize and whose past rulings on the Preah Vihear temple it does not accept, did little to calm the situation.

On July 16, three Thai soldiers were wounded by a landmine explosion during a routine patrol in the disputed border area near Ubon Ratchathani and Cambodia's Preah Vihear province. Thailand accused Cambodia of placing landmines, which Cambodia denied, claiming the soldiers strayed into areas with unexploded ordnance. The situation worsened on July 23 when another explosion near Ta Muen Thom temple injured a Thai soldier. In response, Thailand recalled its ambassador from Phnom Penh and expelled Cambodia's ambassador. Cambodia downgraded diplomatic relations with Thailand and recalled its embassy staff.

On 24 July, fighting broke out between Thai and Cambodian soldiers near Ta Moan Thom. The Cambodian Ministry of National Defence accused Thai forces of opening fire unprovoked at their troops. In response, Cambodian forces exercised their right to self-defense. The conflict quickly spread to the Ta Krabei temple and Phnom Khmao areas, with both sides deploying heavy weaponry, including BM-21 rockets and artillery. The conflict marked a serious escalation when the Royal Thai Air Force F-16 fighter jets conducted an aerial strike targeting a Cambodian military position along the disputed border zone in Preah Vihear Province. As per Cambodia the Thai armed forces launched unprovoked,

premeditated and deliberate attacks on Cambodian positions along the border areas, including Tamone Thom Temple, Ta Krabey Temple and Mom Bei, in the provinces of Preah Vihear and Oddar Meanchey.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet in a letter send to the UNSC on July 24, requested an urgent meeting of the Security Council to stop Thailand's aggression against its sovereignty. In the letter the Prime Minister Hun Manet called on Thailand to immediately cease all hostilities, withdraw its forces to its side of the border, and refrain from any further provocative actions that could escalate the situation.

Meanwhile, the military of Thailand stated that it condemns Cambodia for using weapons to attack civilians in Thailand and would protect sovereignty and its people. The Thai leadership also warned that the escalations could "move towards war". The possibility of a full-blown war became a major regional concern, with increasing calls for de-escalation and restrain.

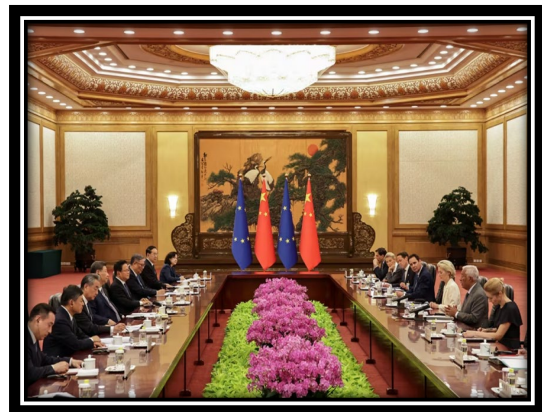
The Cambodian and Thai governments agreed to meet in Putrajaya, Malaysia on 28 July. After more than two hours of talks the Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet and Thailand's acting Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai agreed to an "immediate and unconditional" ceasefire which took effect from midnight local time. Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, stated that the ceasefire is the first step in de-escalating and restoring peace and security.

Currently, as per official source from Cambodia, its armed forces have firmly taken and are holding positions to defend Ta Moan Thom Temple, Ta Krabey Temple, Phnom Trop, Mom Bei, and An She. The intense conflict which lasted for five days, has resulted in significant casualties, which included civilians and military personnel being wounded. It is estimated that about 250,000 people have been displaced across Thailand's Surin, Sisaket, and Ubon Ratchathani provinces and Cambodia's Oddar Meanchey region.

China-EU 25th Summit Held in Beijing

Marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the EU, the 25th China-EU Summit took place in Beijing on 24 July 2025. European Council President António Costa, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and High Representative for Foreign Affairs Kaja Kallas met with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang.

The summit was earlier scheduled to take place in Brussels; however, Chinese leaders declined the invitation, indicating a firm stance by Beijing towards the EU. The relationship between China and EU institutions, as well as with several key member states, remains at a standstill.



This relationship has significantly

deteriorated due to ongoing trade disputes and Beijing's position on Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The two sides reviewed bilateral ties and discussed key geopolitical and global challenges. The post-summit joint statement reiterated the mutual commitment towards ensuring international stability, advancing multilateralism, and addressing climate change.

During the meeting, President Xi stated that the China-EU partnership should be based on mutual respect, openness, and cooperation. He emphasised that China and the EU, despite differences in systems and development paths, have no fundamental geopolitical conflicts. Xi also said that in the face of increasing complexities in international relations, China and the EU need to "strengthen communication, enhance mutual trust and deepen cooperation." He reiterated that the strategic choices made by Chinese and EU leaders could contribute to "more stability and certainty in the world."

Xi proposed three key pillars for enhancing China-EU relations. First, maintaining mutual respect to strengthen the China-EU partnership, whereby both sides acknowledge differences without letting them hinder progress. He emphasised that Europe's current challenges do not originate from China. Second, Xi Jinping, highlighting that economic decoupling could harm both sides, proposed openness and cooperation to manage differences. He warned that "building walls and barriers" and "decoupling and severing supply chains" would lead to self-isolation. Finally, Xi called for promoting multilateralism to uphold international rules and order. He suggested that China and the EU could work together to ensure the stability of the international order established after the Second World War, reform the global governance system, and address climate change. Xi affirmed that China is ready to advance cooperation with the EU on artificial intelligence and green energy.

The EU, on its part, reaffirmed its interest in deepening ties with China and stressed that such engagement should yield concrete results on shared challenges like climate change, trade, and global stability. The war in Ukraine featured as a significant topic of discussion. The EU called the conflict an existential threat to international security and urged China to uphold the UN Charter, avoid supporting Russia's military-industrial base, and use its influence to promote a just peace. Concerns were raised about North Korea's alleged support for Russia, which the EU said jeopardised both European and East Asian security. While China and the EU are major trading partners with bilateral trade reaching €730 billion in 2024, the EU highlighted a significant trade imbalance, with a €305 billion deficit. On climate cooperation, the EU encouraged China to undertake a strong emissions reduction plan through 2035, increase climate finance, join the Global Methane Pledge, and contribute to biodiversity and plastic pollution initiatives. In the digital sphere, the EU called for greater reciprocity, pointing to limited access for European companies in China and non-transparent data security and cross-border data transfer rules. The EU also voiced concern over cyberattacks originating from China. On human rights, the EU raised ongoing

concerns regarding Xinjiang, Tibet, the treatment of minorities and human rights defenders, and the erosion of freedoms in Hong Kong.

Observers noted that despite high talk of cooperation and joint efforts, the summit failed to forge a consensus on critical issues like the supply chain mechanism, China's export control on rare earth minerals and support for Russia. Further, the shortening of the event by one day and the lack of any significant outcomes indicated signs of disagreement on important geopolitical and geo-economic issues that could have also overshadowed the conference proceedings. Notably, the Chinese media coverage of the event remained limited and cautious.

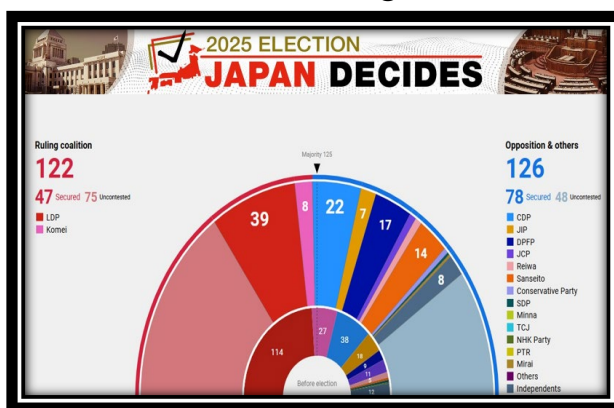
The Global Times observed that as international politics is undergoing "profound changes", China-EU relations stand at a new crossroad. Urging the EU to "objectively consider" the issues facing EU-China relations, Chinese commentators warned that "mutual trust between China and Europe will take a long time to accumulate".

Moving forward, China and the EU are unlikely to take a conciliatory approach vis-à-vis each other, ceding ground on economic and strategic interests.

Japan's Upper House Elections 2025

The administration of Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba was dealt another setback on 20 July as elections to the House of Councillors, Japan's upper legislative chamber, resulted in the ruling coalition (comprised of Ishiba's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its junior ally the Clean Government Party or Komeito) falling short of a majority. Given that Ishiba already has a minority in the House of Representatives, the lower legislative chamber, this means that his administration is now at grave risk of being unsettled by a single no-confidence

motion mooted by the many opposition parties which have secured a foothold in parliament.



As with other bicameral legislatures around the world, Japan's upper house elects half of its members every three years, with Councillors serving six years in total. Election results unveiled on Monday, 21 July, showed that the LDP-Komeito combine found

itself limited to 122 out of the 248 seats being contested in the election, a loss of three seats necessary to retain its majority. On the other hand, opposition parties gained 27 seats in total since the last round of elections, weighing in at 126 seats. The most prominent gainers were the right-of-centre party Democratic Party for the People (DPFP) and the far-right populist Sanseito party, which gained 17 and 14 seats respectively. Established centre-left parties such as the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ), Reiwa Shinsengumi and the far-left Japanese Communist Party (JCP) each lost seats in the election.

The election results speak conclusively to the persistence of deep anger among the voting public against the policy missteps of the LDP-Komeito alliance. This anger, with its genesis in the assassination of Shinzo Abe in 2022 and subsequent revelations of the party's deep connections to the Unification Church cult, was further broadened by the massive graft scandal uncovered in 2023-24, which resulted in several LDP heavyweights losing their political positions. Since Ishiba entered office, matters have been exacerbated by his administration's ham-fisted mismanagement of Japan's food security, particularly with regard to rice, its staple food item. Bad harvests leading to shortages in rice production were met by the government's strong initial reluctance to release emergency rice stocks, leading to the prices of rice shooting up and causing attendant effects on cost-of-living increases. It is clear that these factors were critical in handing Ishiba the heavy loss he suffered, first in October 2024's lower house elections and now in the upper house as well.

However, the rise of the Sanseito to legislative relevance also points to a concerning new trend gathering steam in Japanese politics. Throughout the campaign period, this far-right populist outfit released a stream of public statements that have variously been identified as xenophobic, misogynistic, conspiracist, disrespectful to the Japanese Imperial Family and contrary to the Japanese Constitution. Sections of the party's platform have been found to be direct translations of elements of the agenda promoted by the American far-right, and there have been allegations that its views received significant social media boosting from Russian state-sponsored propaganda outlets. Leaders of the party have also resorted to the use of pejoratives reminiscent of Japan's pre-war militarist regime to target their political rivals, which caused significant alarm in political circles.

Belated fact-checking efforts launched by mainstream Japanese media outlets found the lion's share of the party's statements to be either deliberate lies or unverified half-truths. Yet the fact that the party has been able to go from 0 seats last cycle to 14, mostly on the back of support extended by young people below the age of 30, proves two things. The first is that contrary to many commentators' opinions, far-right populism can mobilise Japanese voters as much as voters elsewhere, particularly as spread through social media. Secondly, anti-immigrant rhetoric has been particularly effective in mobilising Japanese voters, meaning that ethnonationalist conceptions of the state and citizenship are alive and well.

Japan's political system is at serious risk of returning to the days of instability seen before 2012, especially as Ishiba is now seen as a risk. Calls for his resignation have already emerged within the LDP, and the ultranationalist Right is already demanding that it have a greater say in policymaking, especially concerning Japan's halting opening to foreign workers. To his credit, Ishiba has resolved to remain firm, declining to resign from his position until sensitive negotiations with the United States of America on tariffs are resolved. However, one cannot be optimistic regarding positive progress in outreach to other countries such as India. As such, it may be best not to entertain any illusions about bilateral relations advancing during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to Japan.