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BRICS Summit and the Journey of Chandrayaan-3

Femy Francis, Rohini Reenum and Sneha Surendaran



(Image Source: Dawn)

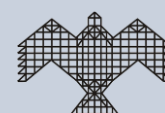
BRICS Summit poised as the Champion of Global South

Femy Francis

What Happened?

On 22 August, the BRICS leaders arrived in Johannesburg, South Africa, for the 15th summit aiming to discuss the need for expansion, and further economic and trade cooperation between the member states. On 24 August, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, announced that BRICS member countries- Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa- agreed to the inclusion of the countries Iran, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Egypt, Argentina and the United Arab Emirates to the bloc, effective from 01 January 2024.

The agenda for BRICS 2023 focused on 'Inclusive Multilateralism.' In the face of coercive unilateralism, the bloc aimed for diverse representation and collaboration. The joint statement also mentioned the need to commit towards a peaceful resolution to defuse conflicts. Additionally, they promoted the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on poverty alleviation and climate change. The highlight of the summit was the inclusion of the six members into the bloc.



Statements by BRICS leaders on the summit

President Cyril Ramaphosa said: “This summit reaffirmed the importance of BRICS people-to-people exchanges and enhancing mutual understanding, friendship and cooperation.” Brazil’s President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva expressed that: “Our diversity strengthens the fight for a new international order.” Chinese President Xi Jinping's speech focused on the need for expansion, which can be highlighted through the statement: “We need to act on the BRICS spirit of openness, inclusiveness, and win-win cooperation to bring more countries into the BRICS family and, to pool our wisdom and strength to make global governance more just and equitable.” Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed the Russia- Ukraine war and accused the West of “illegal” sanctions and urged for bloc cooperation. India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated: “To make BRICS future-ready, we will need to make our respective societies ready for the future, and technology will play an important role.” White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan expressed that the US does not observe BRICS as their rival, and would continue to engage with the bloc members while pushing back Russia's aggression.

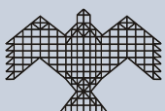
What is the Background?

First, a brief on BRICS. The term ‘BRIC’ was first coined by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O’ Neill, highlighting the economic capability of Brazil, Russia, India and China. He claimed that BRIC countries would grow quicker than many advanced global economies, and in 2009 the group was formed (within a year after South Africa joined the bloc). The bloc comprises 41 per cent of the world’s population and 24 per cent of the world’s GDP, with a 16 per cent share in world trade. Additionally, the member countries formed the New Development Bank (NDB) to become an alternative option to the West-based World Bank.

Second, the idea of expansion and creating a multilateral world order. China has been the strongest proponent of the BRICS expansion with Russia in the bloc. President Xi Jinping urged for expansion, stating that it would introduce new ‘vitality’ into the bloc. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, initially sceptical of the expansion, also welcomed the initiative stating: “India fully supports the expansion of BRICS and welcomes move based on consensus,” while also proposing the inclusion of the African Union into the G-20. President Vladimir Putin, attending the summit online owing to international sanctions, said: “I would like to call out for more expansion of BRICS around the world. We will also establish the procedures so that BRICS continue to grow.” President Xi Jinping explicitly expressed that: “hegemonism is not in China’s DNA,” hinting at a Western alliance that follows the hegemonic lead of US interests. At the summit, he expressed that they do not aim to participate in power play and competition leading to ‘bloc confrontation.’ The idea of expansion is based on providing an alternative to the western led world order.

Third, unilateral sanctions by the West and the Russia-Ukraine war. Russia has faced stringent actions from the West post its invasion of Ukraine. It froze half of the foreign currencies in the reserves of Russia after the war against Ukraine commenced, with the west imposing sanctions aiming to isolate Russia.

Additionally, similar stringent measures have been taken against China were the west particularly the US heavily sanctioned China for the export of semiconductors. With the US weaponizing dollars by imposing sanctions, there has been an inclination by countries to look for alternative currencies and rely on local currencies for trade where President Putin, also called for “de-dollarization.



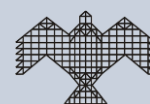
Fourth, bilateral challenges may hinder BRICS' functionality. The expansion has provided the bloc with much-needed clout and opportunities. The question arises whether they will be able to bring in any substantial changes, with the bloc facing overlapping bilateral challenges. With the China-India border dispute and Iran, Saudi Arabia's only recent reenkindling brokered by China after years of animosity may stand in the way of making pragmatic decisions and hinder the group's potential. Regardless, the move may make the West rethink its international policy of dominance and aim to rekindle relations with the allies.

What does it mean?

First, scepticism towards expansion and dismay over irrelevance. The driving force of mutual interests brought the actors to agree on the expansion; what is to be noted is that the benefits from the move may vary. As a bloc, BRICS may now be able to gather better attention from the West but there is a persistent concern especially from India, that the bloc may just become a mouthpiece and facilitator for Chinese expansion. Before the current agreement, Brazil, India and even South Africa were hesitant over the idea, with Brazilians fearing that a larger number of members would lead to the diluting of their influence and say in the bloc. The concerns of the countries do remain valid as with this expansion, China and Russia will look to facilitate their agendas, and why shouldn't they? Regardless, economic opportunities trump the fear of irrelevancy.

Second, challenging the Washington-led world order can restructure the global order. The augmentation of BRICS claims to bring about a significant change in the global world order, while the debate stands whether that is even possible. Vivek Mishra, a fellow at the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), said: "There is certainly a space for carving out a new world order," which was created for the better representation of Global South and as a strategic alternative for both Moscow and Beijing, which find themselves at odds with the Washington led alliance. The formation of the New Development Bank is another example where the Global South seeks to garner more control over developmental finances, instead of on the IMF and thus challenging the global financing architecture.

Third, BRICS is outweighed by Chinese interests. While BRICS promotes multilateralism and representation of a diverse Global South, Chinese influence looms high. China has twice the GDP of its member countries combined, meaning that even with a stagnant and slow economy, it fares better than the other countries. China furthering its agenda can be observed through the recent inclusion of new members to the bloc, where all six new members are part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China sees BRICS as a counter to the US and therefore it aims push its global agenda by bringing in countries where it had previously invested in through BRI.



India's Journey to the Moon: The Chandrayaan-3 Story

Rohini Reenum

What happened?

On 4 July, India's third lunar mission, Chandrayaan-3, was launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Center in Sriharikota, with the purpose of making a soft landing on the south pole of the moon. The mission spacecraft had three modules- the orbiter, the lander (Vikram) and the rover (Pragyaan). This module does not land on the moon and instead settles on the parking orbit of 100km100km around the moon. The lander and rover will separate from the propulsion module to land on the moon, and are designed to operate for one lunar daylight period (about 14 Earth days).

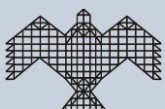
On 18 August, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) successfully performed the first deboosting operation that reduced its orbit to 113 km x 157 km. This was performed the day after the lander module separated from the propulsion module, post a 34-day-long journey toward the Moon. On 20 August, ISRO performed the second and final deboost of the lander module, to reduce the it to 25 km x 134 km. On August 23, precisely at 6:04 pm IST, the Vikram Lander touched down on the lunar surface, making a successful soft landing.

After landing, it sent a message to ISRO'S Bengaluru headquarters that the latter shared on X: "India, [I reached my destination](#) and you too!" This made India the first and only country to land near the Moon's South Pole.

Following the successful landing, congratulatory messages poured in from within India and abroad. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: "This moment is unforgettable. It is phenomenal. This is a victory cry of a new India." NASA administrator Bill Nelson said: "Congratulations ISRO on your successful Chandrayaan-3 lunar South Pole landing! And congratulations to India for being the 4th country to successfully soft-land a spacecraft on the Moon. We're glad to be your partner on this mission!" Russian President Vladimir Putin also congratulated India and called the moon landing an "impressive" achievement, days after Moscow's own mission crashed. "This is a big step forward in space exploration and, of course, a testament to the impressive progress made by India in the field of science and technology," read a statement from the Kremlin. The US Department of State's Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs said Chandrayaan-3's success would power the "imagination" of people in the future and that its "success will power the imagination and light the future of people around the world."

What is the Background?

First, a brief background of the previous Chandrayaan missions. According to ISRO, the vision of the Department of Space, which is the nodal agency that decides the agenda related to space, is "to harness, sustain and augment space technology for national development, while pursuing space science research and planetary exploration."It is against the backdrop of this vision that the Chandrayaan Program (also known as the Indian Lunar Exploration Program), which is an ongoing series of outer space missions by ISRO for exploration of the moon, was conceived and launched.



Second, the mapping of Chandrayaan-1 and Chandrayaan-2. Chandrayaan-1, which was launched on 22 October 2008 aboard a [PSLV-XL](#) rocket, was a big success for ISRO as the [Moon Impact Probe](#), a payload on board the Chandrayaan-1 spacecraft, discovered traces of water on the Moon. Apart from detecting water, the Chandrayaan-1 mission performed several other tasks such as mapping the Moon and profiling its atmosphere. Chandrayaan-2 was launched on 22 July 2019 aboard a [LVM3](#) rocket. The spacecraft was successfully put into the lunar orbit but the lander was lost while attempting to land. The orbiter is operational, collecting scientific data and expected to function for 7.5 years.

Third, the objectives of Chandrayaan-3. According to ISRO, Chandrayaan-3 is a follow-up mission to Chandrayaan-2, and has three major objectives: to demonstrate a safe and soft landing on the surface of the moon, conduct rover operations on the moon, and conduct on-site experiments on the lunar surface. The first objective has been completed with the Vikram lander achieving a safe and soft landing. It makes India only the fourth country to achieve this behind the erstwhile USSR, the US, and China. The second objective is in operation, with the Pragyan rover having been rolled out on the moon's surface to carry out an in-situ chemical analysis of the lunar surface during the course of its mobility.

What does it mean?

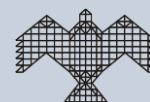
The successful launch and landing of Chandrayaan-3 has demonstrated India's capability to not only carry out complex space missions on its own but has proven it to be a reliable partner in the space sector for collaboration and cooperation. This is important as India has been looking to expand into the private commercial space sector for some time now. It is no wonder that two days after the country launched the Chandrayaan-3 mission, the GST Council, in a surprise announcement, exempted private launch service companies from paying GST if they launched satellites into space using their launch vehicles or rockets.

In April this year, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) approved the Indian Space Policy, 2023. While promoting the role to be played by the private sector, the policy aims to augment the country's space capabilities; enable, encourage and develop a flourishing commercial presence in space; use space as a driver of technology. Moreover, India has achieved this at a much lower cost than other nations like Russia, the US, and China. This means that more nations will be willing to use India's services to launch their own satellites into space, as has been happening for a few years now.

A Profile of Yevgeny Prigozhin

Sneha Surendaran

On 23 August, Prigozhin was reported dead in a plane crash in the Tver region of Russia en route from St. Petersburg from Moscow. The official list of passengers in the plane included the names of Dmitry Utkin and eight senior Wagner commanders, apart from the flight crew. Prigozhin's presence in Russia was unexpected as on 21 August, he appeared in a video, donned in military attire, and claimed to be in an African country. In the video, he stated: "Wagner is conducting reconnaissance and search operations, making Russia even greater on every continent — and Africa even more free."



On 23 August, two months to the day of the Wagner revolt, Prigozhin, who was dubbed a “walking dead man” due to his daring challenge to the Russian state, allegedly died in a plane crash in Russia. Mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin, 62, walked away seemingly unharmed after he led a short-lived rebellion on Russian soil. Prigozhin’s name had occasionally cropped up in the international arena, but on 23 June he grabbed the world’s attention when he ordered the troops of his private military force, Wagner, to march to Moscow. However, beyond his persona as the leader of the Wagner group, Prigozhin was a man who wore multiple hats.

Humble beginnings

Yevgeny Viktorovich Prigozhin was a native of St. Petersburg, Russia, the same as Vladimir Putin. His mother was a hospital nurse while his father, a mining engineer, died when Prigozhin was nine. His stepfather, a ski instructor, sparked an interest in cross-country skiing in the young boy. Prigozhin joined and graduated from the Leningrad Sports Boarding School in 1977. However, an injury put an end to his sports dreams. At the age of 18, Prigozhin received his first prison sentence for theft, which marked the beginning of his early foray into crime.

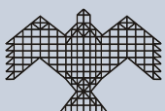
Although the jail term was suspended, in a couple of years he received a 13-year jail term for robbery and theft. Prigozhin spent the next nine years in prison. Following his release in 1990, he set up a stable hot dog stall business with his family. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Prigozhin began looking for opportunities in the entrepreneurial and business sectors. By 1995, he was able to establish himself in the food catering industry, opening restaurants and food catering companies under his major enterprise, Concord Catering. This was to become his first step into the corridors of power.

As business flourished, Prigozhin began interacting with the elite class of Russian society. Concord Catering started to get good reviews from its customers, leading to even the military calling for its services. A businessman who knew Prigozhin at the time, remarked: “He can adapt to please any person if he needs something from them. That is definitely one of his talents.”

Growing acquaintance with Putin

While Prigozhin was raising his business empire, Vladimir Putin had been climbing the political ladder. Once Putin became President, Prigozhin’s catering business flourished with contracts from the Kremlin and the military. One of Putin’s favourite spots for dining was Prigozhin’s boat restaurant, named ‘Novyi Ostrov’ or New Island, situated in the Neva River that runs alongside St. Petersburg. Here, he hosted his foreign guests and personal celebrations. Through these events, Prigozhin’s ties to Putin began strengthening. Prigozhin once remarked: “Vladimir Putin...saw that I had no problem serving plates to dignitaries in person.” This is corroborated by the many photographs available that depict Putin sharing a meal with dignitaries like former US President George Bush, with Prigozhin in the background.

Over time, Prigozhin’s companies began earning billions of dollars’ worth of catering contracts from schools and colleges in Moscow, facilitated by his political connections. In fact, since 2013, 90 per cent of catering contracts from the Russian defence ministry have been in the hands of Prigozhin’s network. Eventually, Prigozhin came to be known as “Putin’s chef.” At the same time, Putin too would benefit politically from his relationship with the businessman, as there was more to Prigozhin than just being “Putin’s chef.”



This began with the origins of Wagner, a private military company that first came on the international radar in 2014. Russia had invaded and annexed Crimea, while Russian-backed separatists were creating unrest in the eastern Ukrainian cities of Luhansk and Donetsk. At the time, there were reports of uniformed soldiers, dubbed “little green men,” in the regions of tension. Wearing masks, carrying weapons, and donning green uniforms but without the Russian insignia, it was speculated that some of these men belonged to the littleknown Wagner group. Although the group is thought to have been the brainchild of Dmitry Utkin, a veteran military officer and Nazi propagandist, evidence to verify the true extent of his connection to Wagner is scarce.

The EU considers Utkin as the founder of Wagner, responsible for “coordinating and planning operations for the deployment.” Meanwhile, Prigozhin was the face of Wagner for the world. While Prigozhin and the Wagner group operated in the shadows for a long time, they came into the spotlight to support Russia’s military in the Ukraine invasion. However, for a long time, Prigozhin staunchly refused any ties with the mercenary group. He even sued journalists who implied the opposite. The Russian state too denied any connection to Wagner.

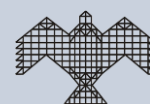
In 2022, Wagner registered in Russia as a joint stock company named ‘PMC Wagner Centre.’ Finally, in September 2022, Prigozhin admitted to creating Wagner, saying that he previously denied it to protect the group, stating: “I cleaned the old weapons myself...found specialists who could help me with this...on 1 May 2014, a group of patriots was born...called the Wagner Battalion.” Prigozhin reportedly recruited Wagner troops from Russian prisons, promising them freedom if they lasted for six months. These recruits were often people with military experience or a history of violence. To bring them into Wagner’s fold, Prigozhin is said to have cited his own prison experiences with the criminals.

Apart from the military sector, Prigozhin also operated in cyberspace on behalf of the state. In November 2022, Prigozhin admitted to meddling in the US’ 2016 Presidential elections. In a post made through the press service of Concord Catering, he stated: “We have interfered (in U.S. elections), we are interfering, and we will continue to interfere. Carefully, accurately, surgically, and in our way, as we know how to do.”

Furthermore, in February 2023, he revealed his connections to the company Washington had accused of interfering in the 2016 US elections, the Internet Research Agency. Washington had described it as a “troll farm” for spreading disinformation online. Prigozhin revealed: “I thought it up, I created it, I managed it for a long time.” He said that the organization aimed to “protect the Russian information space from the West's boorish and aggressive anti-Russian propaganda.”

Crossing Putin and the Russian state

Prigozhin had a tough relationship with the Russian military leaders. However, these connections soured during the time he spent leading Wagner in the Ukraine invasion, especially during the battle of Bakhmut. He repeatedly spoke out against the competence of the military leaders, alleging that they refused to supply his troops with ammunition, calling it a deliberate move to undermine Wagner. He went so far as to imply that the leaders were committing treason.



In one of his online rants, he stated: “The shells are lying in warehouses, they are resting there... There are people who fight, and there are people who have learned once in their lives that there must be a reserve, and they save, save, save those reserves... Instead of spending a shell to kill the enemy, they kill our soldiers. And happy grandfather thinks this is okay.” When netizens connected the “grandfather” comment to Putin, Prigozhin was quick to deny it. During his participation in the Ukraine war, he extensively made use of social media to post updates regarding Wagner’s victories and criticism of the military.

The tension between Prigozhin and the military leaders finally culminated in the Wagner rebellion on 23 June. Prigozhin’s troops captured Rostov-on-Don, a military base, and began marching towards Moscow. While Putin denounced the rebellion as treason, Prigozhin stated that the revolt was not against the President, but rather the defence leadership whom he accused of firing a missile at his troops. The revolt ended when Belarus’ President Alexander Lukashenko, negotiated a truce according to which, all charges against Prigozhin were dropped by the state, and he was allowed refuge in Belarus.

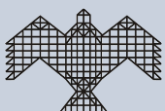
On 27 June, Lukashenko announced that the mercenary leader had arrived in Belarus. However, reports later cited that Prigozhin was back in Moscow. The Kremlin also released a statement confirming that Wagner commanders led by Prigozhin had met Putin days after the aborted mutiny. Matters of future employment of the Wagner troops in Russian service, and the events of the mutiny were discussed at the meeting, which insinuated that Russia still banked on Prigozhin-led Wagner’s involvement.

On 19 July, Prigozhin made his first appearance on camera following the mutiny. In it, he said that Wagner would be focusing on Africa and in training the Belarusian army. He further condemned Russia’s performance in the Ukraine invasion, stating: “What is currently happening on the front line is a disgrace that we don’t want to have any part in, and we need to wait until we can show our mettle in full.” However, Prigozhin stopped short of critiquing the military leaders as he used to in the past.

Alleged death in a plane crash

Prigozhin’s death elicited mixed responses from all quarters. Sympathizers termed his death as a win for Ukraine and a blow to Russia. Naturally, fingers pointed to Putin and the Russian state’s involvement, as it is no secret that in the past, numerous critics of the president have met untimely deaths. The Kremlin decried the allegations, as “false.” Meanwhile, Putin remarked on the death of his former ally, calling him a “talented man,” saying: “He made serious mistakes in life. But he achieved results both for himself and the common good when I asked for it - like in the last few months.”

As for the Wagner group that finds itself bereft of its top commanders, the extended implications of Prigozhin’s death for Russia are clouded in uncertainty now.” However, while investigations continue, there has been no official confirmation of the death of Yevgeny Prigozhin. In death, as in life, he continues to maintain an aura of mystery around him.



Also in the news...

Regional Round-ups

East and Southeast Asia This Week

China: Suspends seafood imports from Japan

On 24 August, the Chinese customs office announced that they would "comprehensively" suspend any seafood imports from Japan. The reason stated was that they want to avoid any risk of radioactive contamination from the nuclear-treated water to ensure food safety. Additionally, the Chinese Ministry of Ecology and Environment announced that they would take the necessary steps to monitor any radiation in the sea caused by the release. The Japanese government has evaluated the safety of the release with a two-year review by the International Atomic Energy Agency. However, this has not been well received by countries, with mass protests in South Korea and North Korea.

China: Urges US to stop arming Taiwan

On 25 August, the Chinese Defence Ministry accused the US of "arming" Taiwan and urged them to stop. This comes after the USD 500 million sale of the Island of Infrared Search and Track Systems for F-16 fighter jets was approved by the US State Department. Chinese Defence Ministry spokesperson Zhang Xiaognag said: "China urges the U.S. side to effectively fulfil its commitment not to support the independence of Taiwan, to immediately stop arming Taiwan, and to stop enhancing US-Taiwan military ties."

Malaysia: Buys stake in a shipyard amid Navy Frigate Project woes

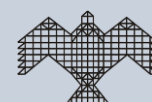
On 23 August, according to *The Maritime Executive*, Boustead Heavy Industries sold its 20 per cent stake in Boustead Naval Shipyard to the Malaysian government, aiming to salvage troubled navy frigate construction projects plagued by delays and cost overruns. The shipyard's primary client is the Royal Malaysian Navy. The project to build six frigates, based on France's Naval Group Gowind-class design, faced corruption charges and contractual disputes, pushing delivery timelines and costs. The government's intent to take full ownership of the shipyard aims to ensure the completion of the frigates. The move aligns with a wider restructuring of the shipyard, set to conclude in Q4 2023. This move reflects Malaysia's determination to regain control over the troubled navy frigate program, and marks a significant step in reasserting ownership and oversight over key defence projects.

Cambodia: Elects first female President of the National Assembly

On 22 August, a member of the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), Khuon Sudary, was elected as the first female president of Cambodia's National Assembly, marking a historic milestone. She secured the position with unanimous support from 123 lawmakers, after the CPP's overwhelming victory in the recent general election. The assembly also appointed Cheam Yeap and Vong Sauth as the first and second vice presidents, respectively. The CPP secured 120 out of 125 seats in the National Assembly. Sudary's election is a significant advancement for women's representation in Cambodian politics, though challenges to broader gender parity remain.

Indonesia: Signs MoU for procurement of Boeing's F-15EX fighter jets

On 22 August, according to a statement by Indonesia's Ministry of Defence, Indonesia and Boeing signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the acquisition of 24 F-15EX fighter jets, a significant step toward enhancing the country's air defence capabilities. The signing took place at Boeing's office in the US, witnessed by Prabowo Subianto, Indonesia's



Defence Minister. The deal, executed under the foreign military sales scheme, signifies Indonesia's commitment to bolstering its security and air dominance capabilities. The move aligns with Indonesia's strategic military modernization efforts to address evolving security challenges in the region.

South Asia This Week

Pakistan: Not yet submitted a formal request to join BRICS, says foreign office spokesperson

On 25 August, Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that Pakistan had not yet submitted a formal application to join the BRICS group of developing countries. She said: "We will examine the latest developments and decide about our future engagement with BRICS" and "Pakistan is an ardent supporter of multilateralism and as a member of several multilateral organizations it has always played an important role for global peace and development." Additionally, Baloch expressed her appreciation to the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) scientists for Chandrayaan-3's successful landing, calling it "a great scientific achievement." When questioned about the statements made by the UN and other international bodies in the wake of the attacks on the Christian community in Jaranwala, Baloch stated that Pakistan had harshly denounced the atrocity.

Middle East and Africa This Week

Zimbabwe: Conducts general elections

On 23 August, Zimbabwe began its election for councillors, members of parliament, and a president. 11 candidates are running for the presidential seat, with more than six million people expected to cast their votes. However, the contest is between two popular candidates: incumbent Emmerson Mnangagwa from the governing Zanu-PF Party, and opposition leader Nelson Chamisa from the Citizen's Coalition for Change (CCC). The opposition is seeking to end the 43-year rule of the Zanu-PF party. Since 1980, the Zanu-PF party has been in power and criticized for continuously clamping down on opposition to remain in power. The country struggles with rising costs of living, inflation, crippling power outages, and corruption. People in the urban areas and the young population believe that it is time for a change.

Europe and the Americas This Week

Heatwaves across the southeast of France

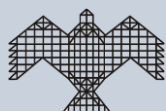
On 21 August, *Le Monde* reported on a heatwave in the Rhone Valley region, along with wildfires in the southeast. According to the report, the temperatures are expected to increase, with southern France experiencing the highest temperatures. It is estimated that 50 out of 96 health departments in France have warned of high heat levels. France's national weather service spokesperson said: "Some records could be broken, notably on Tuesday in the Rhone valley with 40-42°C expected."

Ukraine: Eastern Europe and the Balkans pledge support

On 22 August, in a summit held in Greece, 11 countries from eastern Europe and the Balkans signed a joint declaration in support of the "territorial integrity of Ukraine." The declaration assured Ukrainesupport in terms of independence, sovereignty, and territory, and vouched for instilling values of democracy and the rule of law. The leaders also assured support for Ukraine in drafting its "principles of peace," in line with the UN Charter.

Germany: The government proposes to minimize the tenure required to attain citizenship

On 23 August, Germany's government submitted a proposal to reform its citizenship law. The proposal is subject to discussion in both houses of the parliament. According to the report from Deutsche Welle, the proposal will allow dual citizenship while simultaneously breaking down the naturalization process from eight to five years.



Under this plan, whoever shows a high level of integration and advanced German skills, will be eligible to obtain citizenship in three years. According to the German Press Agency, the proposal excludes those who have committed crimes for “antisemitic and racist” purposes. This is viewed as a move to mainly attract foreign workers to seal off the labour shortages.

Ecuador: Referendum passed to ban Amazonian oil drilling

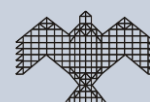
On 21 August, a referendum, deemed “historic” by environmental activists, was passed with 60 per cent of votes to ban oil drilling in the Yasuni National Park. This park is a protected area of the Amazon, as it hosts endangered mammals and thousands of insects, and is thus a UNESCO biosphere reserve. With the Amazon nearing its tipping point, and former President Correa’s decision to drill for oil, the results of this referendum mean protection for biodiversity and Indigenous communities. However, the energy minister stated that the ban would “result in a loss of \$1.2bn annually, which would be detrimental to the country’s economy.”

Guatemala: Bernardo Arevalo wins Guatemala's presidential election

On 20 August, Bernardo Arevalo's victory as per preliminary results in Guatemala's presidential run-off was met with international and regional support. Arevalo, a left-wing anti-corruption candidate, secured 58 per cent of the vote, defeating former First Lady Sandra Torres. While official results are yet to be certified, Guatemala's election body head referred to Arevalo as the "virtual winner." The Organization of American States (OAS) chief, Luis Almagro praised the election as an "exemplary election day." International observers hope that Arevalo's landslide victory will mitigate any major challenges to the vote. Supporters made several statements amid celebrations, with one person stating that “his triumph represents the defeat of a corrupt system.” His term of rule will be a complex one due to the current environment of the country; however, there are hopes of the restoration of “democratic values.”

About the authors

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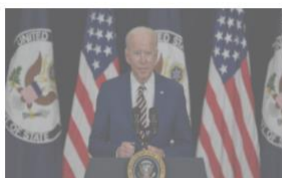


About Global Politics:

The course introduces contemporary world affairs. The primary objective of the course is two – first, to enhance the understanding of contemporary global developments, with an attempt to comprehend the larger picture. Second, to identify trends leading forecasts on contemporary world affairs.

The Course will also invite senior scholars within and outside NIAS – also from within and outside India to provide lectures on contemporary world affairs.

The World This Week



6 February 2021

Biden's new US foreign policy priorities, Russia-EU tensions over Navalny, and China's redline on Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan



30 January 2021

The Daniel Pearl case in Pakistan and the new vaccine complications in Europe



23 January 2021

The US returns to the Paris Agreement, and India reengages the region through a Vaccine diplomacy



16 January 2021

North Korea's Party Congress, Houthis as terrorists, and Elections in Uganda



9 January 2021

Disorderly transition in the US, Breakthrough over Qatar, Enrichment in Iran and Arrests in Hong Kong



27 December 2020

The Year of COVID, Protests and Elections



20 December 2020

India-Bangladesh reset and China's Chang'e-5 success



13 December 2020

Morocco recognizes Israel, Maduro consolidates in Venezuela and No-deal Brexit gets real

About TWTW

The World This Week is an academic initiative of the Global Politics course at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bangalore. The alert, published every Saturday aims to provide its readers with a ready reckoner of major developments during the week under three heads - what happened, what is the background and what does it mean. The Alert also provides an opportunity for the young scholars at NIAS and its partner institutions to follow and comment on contemporary global developments.

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