

Jeddah Ukraine Talks

Senior officials from 42 countries attended a summit in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to discuss peace frameworks for the Russia-Ukraine war from the 5-6 August. Notable countries in attendance included Ukraine, the US and Russia's fellow members of the BRICS trade bloc - Brazil, India, China and South Africa. While the summit did not result in any formal memorandums or dates for future discussions, Western and Ukrainian officials described the talks as productive. Officials added that talks would likely continue in a similar format on the sidelines of the Sept. 5 UN General Assembly or at the Sept. 9-10 Group of 20 summit in India. Kyiv hopes countries from the Global South will ultimately believe that Russia's interests regarding the terms of an eventual peace settlement diverge from their own. China's envoy for Eurasian affairs, Li Hui, reportedly "actively participated" in the summit and is looking forward to another meeting in the near future after meeting with US national security adviser Jake Sullivan and Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland on the sidelines of the event. Though Ukraine did not push for the acceptance of its 10-point plan, other countries did not push for its rejection, nor did they challenge Ukraine's demand that Russia withdraw its troops from occupied territories. The gathering confirms many nations are looking for an end to the war along principles closer to Zelenskyy's peace plan. It also shows the host of the talks, Saudi Arabia's diplomatic isolation due to the murder of Jamal Khashoggi is now in the past.

Victoria Nuland Meets with Niger Junta Leaders

Acting Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland travelled to Niger's capital Niamey on Monday 7th August and held what she described as "difficult" talks with members of the junta that ousted Nigerien President Mohamed Bazoum. "Traveled to Niamey to express grave concern at the undemocratic attempts to seize power and urged a return to constitutional order," Nuland wrote on X, formally known as Twitter. Nuland spoke with reporters on the phone after her talks and said the "conversations were extremely frank and at times quite difficult because, again, we were pushing for a negotiated solution." She said the coup leaders are "quite firm in their view on how they want to proceed, and it does not comport with the constitution of Niger." Nuland said she met with Moussa Salaou Barmou, who has declared himself Niger's defense chief, and three other colonels. Journalist Nick Turse reported for The Intercept that Barmou had previously received military training from the US, something Nuland mentioned in the call with reporters. "General Barmou, former Colonel Barmou, is somebody who has worked very closely with US Special Forces over many, many years," she said. "So we were able to go through in considerable detail the risks to aspects of our cooperation that he has historically cared about a lot. So we are hopeful that that will sink in." Nuland did not mention potential military intervention in the call with reporters and was not asked about the possibility. She said the US hoped the junta would keep "the door open to diplomacy" but sounded doubtful that they would.

Imran Khan Barred from Politics for five years

Former Pakistani prime minister Imran Khan has been barred from politics for five years. Khan, who was on sentenced in a corruption case on Saturday 5th August, was disqualified in line with his conviction, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) said in an order on Tuesday 8th August. Khan, who has denied any wrongdoing, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for misdeclaration of assets he received from foreign countries during the time he was prime minister from 2018 to 2022. He was arrested at his Lahore house and taken to a prison near Islamabad. Khan's legal team has filed an appeal seeking to set aside the guilty verdict, which the Islamabad High Court will take up, his lawyer Naeem Panjutha said. The reaction to Khan's jailing so far has been vastly different to the outpouring of rage that followed his first arrest, even on social media, with half as many Facebook posts mentioning Khan's name. According to columnist Usama Khilji, who told the AFP news agency that the muted response to his arrest is because of the full-throttle crackdown on PTI workers after the first arrest. "*The arrests of PTI workers post the May arrest of Imran Khan, coupled with draconian laws passed in haste by [the coalition government], have had a chilling effect on Pakistani citizens.*"