

THE FUTURE INSTITUTE

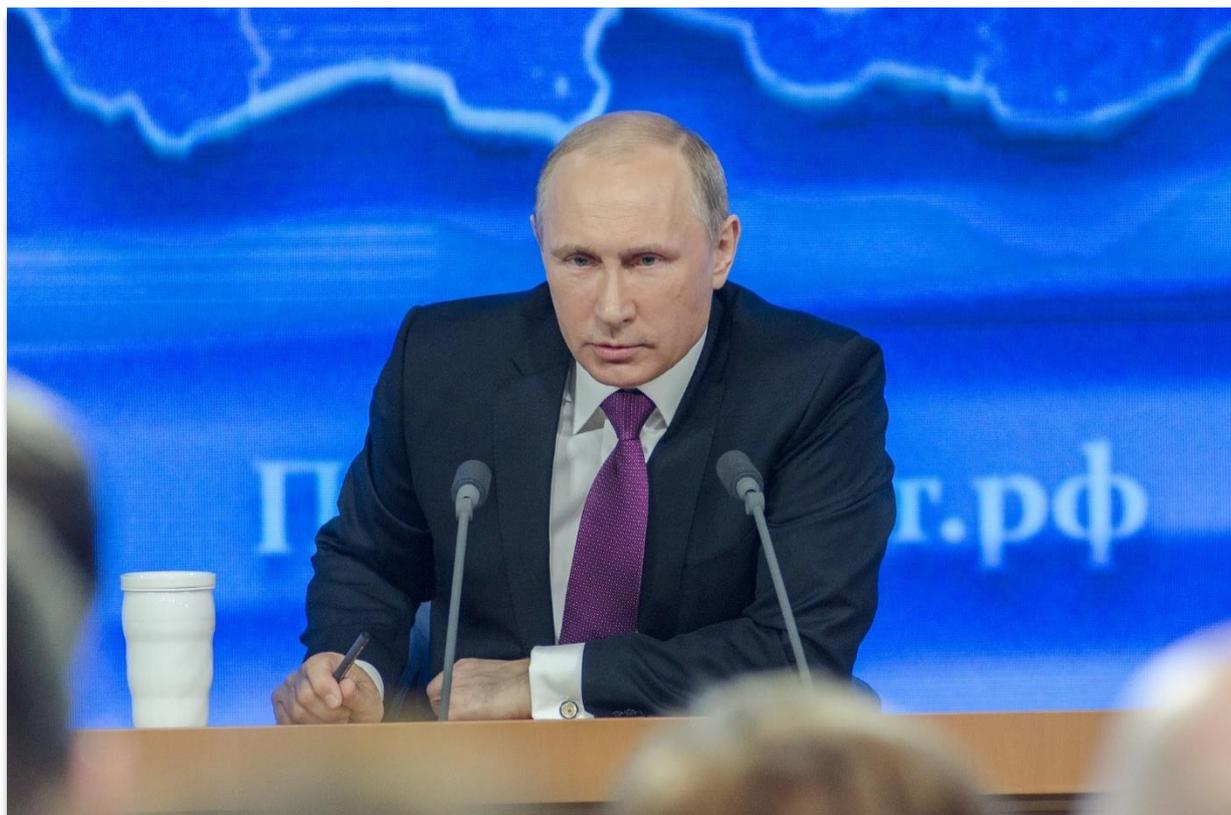
# THE FUTURE

MARCH 2022



The Future is a newsletter periodically published by The Future Institute. This newsletter aims to chronicle the significant events and developments in the societies of the emerging nations with the potential of impacting their future. This publication offers snippets of news analysis that might be advantageous to academics, policymakers, social and political workers, students and various organisations.

If you are interested in engaging with or participating to any TFI project or publication, please write to us at: [admin@tfiuk.org](mailto:admin@tfiuk.org)



## Crisis in Ukraine Deepens: the Latest Events

After a buildup of tensions that spanned several years since the invasion of Crimea by Russia in 2014, whereby Russia had been steadily carrying out a buildup of military capability on the Ukrainian border, the Russo-Ukrainian crisis imploded after a series of major developments starting from 21 February 2022. Russia recognised the two breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine, the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Luhansk People’s Republic, as independent states, and the Russian Federation Council unanimously authorised the use of military force in the territories next day on 22 February, after Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that the Minsk agreements were no longer valid. A full-scale military invasion was launched on 24 February when Putin announced that Russia was initiating a “special peacekeeping military operation” into the Donbas region of Ukraine.

The Russian invasion carried out on three fronts - the Belarusian front in the North, eastern Ukraine from the East, and from the Black Sea region and Crimea in the South, has precipitated a full scale diplomatic, financial, military and humanitarian crisis in the region, raising fears of the spectre of nuclear war. To date, while the Russian military has made incursions into Ukrainian territory, the Ukrainian resistance and defence forces, led by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, have been successful in preventing the Russian military from achieving any significant military gains, with the capital Kyiv still in Ukrainian hands. Russia, on the other hand, has been condemned by the international community for its unilateral incursion; the United Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly during an extraordinary emergency session on 2 March 2022 to pass a resolution— which passed with 141 votes in favour, 35 abstentions and just five votes against — condemning Russia’s military action against Ukraine, and demanding that Russia “immediately cease its use of force against Ukraine.”



*Image by Joachim Schnürle from Pixabay*

Russia has also been subject to significant financial sanctions by all major Western governments, which includes but is not limited to sweeping bans on export and trade of goods and military equipment, freezing of economic assets of Putin, members of his government, and Russian oligarchs, and the removal of Russian banks from the international Mastercard, and SWIFT messaging systems crucial for international cash flows. Bans have been put on Russian oil coming into Europe, and the future of major oil pipeline projects such as Nord Stream-2 is uncertain, which is seen as a major setback for all parties concerned. In military terms, the Ukrainian defence has been bolstered with the latest in drone technology, such as the Turkish TB2 Bayraktar drones, which have proven to be lethal against Russian ground units. Ukrainian strategy has been one of disruption of Russian supply lines, and it has been successful in slowing down Russian advance. A significant amount of Russian military equipment has broken down in Ukraine due to the terrain and technical maintenance issues, which has proven to be another major challenge for the Russian military.

Last but not least, the Russian invasion has precipitated a massive refugee crisis with more than 1.7 million Ukrainian refugees, mostly women and children, crossing the western border of Ukraine through Poland, Romania, Moldova, and Hungary into Europe. Despite the general ease in the flow of Ukrainian refugees, border agents have been accused of not allowing nationals of countries outside Ukraine, such as from countries in Asia and Africa, to flee towards safety; concerns have also been raised regarding students from these countries studying in Ukraine being trapped in the fighting. As an alternative way to diffuse the crisis, although Ukrainian and Russian diplomats have met multiple times to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis, the process has not borne much fruit due to Russian insistence on demilitarisation of Ukraine, a promise to not join any bloc such as the NATO, and the recognition of 2014 Crimean annexation by Russia, alongside the independence of the two breakaway regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.

#### References:

2021–2022 Russo-Ukrainian crisis. (2021, 23 December). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved 8 March, 2022, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2021%E2%80%932022\\_Russo-Ukrainian\\_crisis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2021%E2%80%932022_Russo-Ukrainian_crisis)

Falk, P. (2022, 2 March). U.N. vote on Ukraine sends “loud and clear” message to Russia. Yahoo News - Latest News & Headlines. <https://news.yahoo.com/u-n-vote-ukraine-sends-185930910.html>



Image by Tatyana Kazakova from Pixabay

## Context of Russian Invasion in Ukraine: Reminiscence of Superpower vs Urge for Self-preservation?

The Russian invasion of Ukraine comes at the heels of a breakdown in diplomatic efforts to resolve a simmering crisis between a Russia intent on regaining influence in former Soviet-era republics and a Ukraine bent upon moving farther away from Russian influence towards the European Union and NATO. As has become strongly evident, the Kremlin's primary focus is Ukraine. This is partly about geopolitics and Moscow's desire for a sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space. However, it is also very much about Russian domestic politics.

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 in a move that sparked global condemnation. On the other hand, the war also broke out in the same year in towns and cities across eastern Ukraine after Russian-backed rebels seized government buildings. Intense fighting left portions of Luhansk and Donetsk, in the Donbas region, in the hands of Russian-backed separatists and became the site of a low-intensity war for almost eight years between Russian-backed separatists and Ukrainian forces, which has killed more than 14,000 people. Constant Russian military buildup at the Ukraine-Russian border came to a critical point by December 2021, when over 100,000 Russian troops were massed around Ukraine on three sides. Russia then proposed two draft treaties requesting "security guarantees," including a legally binding promise that Ukraine would not join NATO and a reduction in NATO troops and materiel stationed throughout Eastern Europe, threatening a military response if demands remained unmet. Fast forward to early March, and we have a full-scale invasion of Ukraine and severe international sanctions on Russia with the potential to isolate and severely cripple the Russian economy in the long run.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has often resorted to strong rhetoric in the buildup to the invasion of Ukraine. At times, he has spoken of the historical unity of Russia and Ukraine as "one people" and called the eastern part of Ukraine as "ancient Russian lands." He often spoke of "One Russia," meaning Russia, Ukraine and Belarus — or "Big Russia" and "Little Russia," Russia being the "big" and Ukraine the "little." Not surprisingly, however, in his tactics of denying the status of nationhood to Ukraine, many Ukrainians hear it as a denial of their culture, history and language, a factor which has only seemed to push the Ukrainians towards the E.U. and NATO.

### References:

- Robyn Dixon, & Claire Parker. (2021, 11 December). The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/12/11/russia-ukraine-putin/>
- Qiblawi, T., Hodge, N., Lister, T., & Kottasová, I. (2022, 22 February). Why Donbas is at the heart of the Ukraine crisis. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/02/19/europe/donbas-ukraine-russia-intl-cmd/index.html>
- Stanford University. (2022, 5 January). Understanding the Russia-Ukraine crisis. Stanford News. <https://news.stanford.edu/2022/01/06/understanding-russia-ukraine-crisis/>



Image by hosny salah from Pixabay

## Latest Amnesty Report on Palestine: a Damning Condemnation of Israeli Apartheid

In what experts have hailed as a damning condemnation of Israeli policies, Amnesty International has released details of an investigation labelling Israeli policies against Palestinians as apartheid and a cruel system of domination under international law. It looks into details of massive seizures of Palestinian property and land, unlawful killings, denial of citizenship and nationality of all Palestinians, and movement restrictions, which fits well into a cruel system of apartheid. This system treats Palestinians as an inferior racial group and facilitates their segregation, dispossession, and exclusion across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. The group called for several drastic measures in response to its investigation findings - the investigation by the ICC, an arms embargo on Israel, asset freezes and targeted sanctions from the Security Council against Israeli institutions and officials implicated in apartheid. The report is a significant departure from earlier human rights reports from Western human rights organisations, which had failed to connect Israeli policies discriminating against Palestinians with Israel as an apartheid regime. Palestinian human rights groups hailed the move by Amnesty as significant, noting that it was high time Israeli policies were recognised as not just analogous to apartheid practices but also intimately connected with Zionism and settler colonialism that led to the creation of Israel in the first place. Predictably, Israel has reacted hysterically to the Amnesty report, in a manner similar to earlier reactions against B'Tselem and Human rights Watch reports, labelling it antisemitic. The report comes at a time when Israel has been actively pursuing the normalisation of ties with neighbouring countries in the MENA region, despite widespread public pushback in the latter against them. Israeli efforts recently suffered a drawback when it was ousted from the African Union last month in the reversal of a previous decision to grant it observer status at the organisation.

### References:

African Union summit reverses decision on Israel's observer status. (n.d.). Anadolu Ajansi. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/african-union-summit-reverses-decision-on-israel-s-observer-status/2495481>

Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: A cruel system of domination and a crime against humanity. (2022, 1 February). Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-a-cruel-system-of-domination-and-a-crime-against-humanity/>

What makes amnesty's apartheid report different? (2022, 4 February). The Electronic Intifada. <https://electronicintifada.net/content/what-makes-amnestys-apartheid-report-different/34771>



Image by ErikaWittlieb from Pixabay

## Afghan Crisis

In an unusual set of moves, U.S. President Biden issued an executive order to split \$7 billion in frozen Afghan central bank assets between 9/11 victims' families and humanitarian aid in Afghanistan. The funds, including assets such as currency, bonds and gold, which had been frozen after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, were leftover of the dissolved Afghan government in August and essentially belonged to the Afghan people, raising the question of whether they are the property of the U.S., or indeed, Biden's, to share or give away in the first place.

Although the Taliban immediately claimed ownership of the funds following their takeover, a group of 9/11 victims' relatives, one of several groups who had won default judgments against the group in once seemingly absurd lawsuits years ago, sought to seize it to pay off that debt and won. On the other hand, a collapse of the Afghan economy is imminent, and with it, a humanitarian disaster that is sure to create a refugee crisis, raising a need for increased spending on humanitarian relief. Experts have noted that while the U.S. may have used legal means to divide the money, the fact remains that these belong to the Afghan people, who are in desperate need of it at the moment, in the face of widespread starvation and humanitarian collapse.

### References:

Editorial: It's Afghan money: President Biden shouldn't reserve \$3.5 billion for a subset of terrorism victims. (2022, 5 March). Yahoo News. <https://news.yahoo.com/editorial-afghan-money-president-biden-090000232.html>

Spurring demand by the Taliban, Biden moves to split \$7 billion in frozen Afghan funds. (2022, 11 February). The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/11/us/politics/taliban-afghanistan-911-families-frozen-funds.html?smid=tw-nytimes&smtyp=cur>



Image by liuguangxi from Pixabay

## UHRP Documents Continuing Assimilationist Policy Targeting Uyghur Children - Uyghur Human Rights Project

Mainland Chinese oppression against the Uyghur population in the Xinjiang region has taken many terrible forms, from mass surveillance the razing down of cultural and religious buildings to holding hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs in mass internment camps labelled by the Chinese as re-education centres. Uyghur families have also been forced to host Chinese men at their homes for days on end, while Uyghur women have been forced to marry Chinese men against their will. The strict Chinese state measures and human rights abuses against its Muslim Uyghur population have been termed genocide by independent organisations and many Western governments, including the U.S.

The latest in the line of measures of unabated government- and CCP-supported efforts to intervene in and re-engineer Uyghur lives, as documented by the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP), has uncovered information on the Pomegranate Flower Program, an officially backed local-level initiative at Kashgar to foster interethnic “kinship” between Uyghur children from East Turkistan and children of other ethnic groups from across China. It is mentionable that Uyghur participation in the program is non-voluntary and occurs in an environment where there are already in place measures of tight surveillance and control for a long time.

This comes in the wake of a host of other harsh measures affecting Uyghur children, such as forcible separation from parents on a long term basis, indoctrination in boarding schools and orphanages, and even preventing the birth of future generations of Uyghur children through inflicting sterilisations, abortions, IUD’s etc. upon Uyghur women. As such, the UHRP noted that the new plan was a continuing effort to infringe upon fundamental rights and destroy Uyghur culture and social life, replacing them with coerced kinship based on Mandarin as a common language and love of the party-state as a core value.

### References:

UHRP documents continuing assimilationist policy targeting Uyghur children. (2022, 27 January). Uyghur Human Rights Project. <https://uhrp.org/statement/uhrp-documents-continuing-assimilationist-policy-targeting-uyghur-children/>



## OPINION - Macron's Colonial Nostalgia: Anti-Muslim Islamic Project by Salman Sayyid

French President Emmanuel Macron recently made a move to establish a new body to manage the largest Muslim population in the European Union: The Forum of Islam in France, with stated aims to prevent extremism, curb the influence of foreign powers in affairs of religious minorities in France and ensure that Muslims abide by the country's claims of secularism in public life.

Salman Sayyid, a university professor and author of books on Islamophobia, notes that Macron's move is an attempt to shape Islam in France's own image and not to represent the Muslim community. Sayyid notes the contradictory and hypocritical face of secularism in France, where Muslims are asked to strictly abide by the rules of secularism and shed their Muslimness, yet at the same time, the state has also decided to double its funding of Christian schools in countries with large Muslim populations. This, Sayyid notes, is part of a process of normalisation of Islamophobic, not just as a default position of the state and large portions of society across the political spectrum in France, but as part of a trend of mainstreaming of Islamophobia across the globe. Thus, Islamophobia is not only associated with military dictatorships, totalitarian regimes, settler-colonies, or dynastic despots but it has been fostered for decades in a well-known, established liberal democracy like France as well.

Islamophobia, according to Sayyid, has been fostered through a process of racialisation that categorises Muslims based on their Muslimness; secularisation is a process of undoing that Muslimness and nationalisation of Muslims to cut them off from any ummah like solidarity that may be a threat to the nation-state. Sayyid points out that the main driving force behind such Islamophobic attempts by the French government is colonial nostalgia and any perceived decline of its place on the world stage.

### References:

Salman Sayyid. (2022, February). Opinion - Macron's colonial nostalgia: Anti-Muslim Islamic project. Anadolu Ajansı. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/opinion-macrons-colonial-nostalgia-anti-muslim-islamic-project/2498784>

Image attribute: <https://www.facebook.com/HabibUniversity/photos/a.248378891884731/838993452823269/>





## Facebook Loses Users for the First Time as Parent Company Meta Records Huge Losses

News that the number of daily active users on Facebook had declined triggered a historic plunge in the stock price of Facebook's parent company Meta Platforms, obliterating more than \$230 billion in market value, which is the biggest one-day loss in history for a U.S. company. For the fourth quarter of 2021, Facebook reported that it had 1.929 billion daily active users compared to 1.93 billion in the previous quarter, suggesting that the company had run out of users and was beginning to decline in popularity among social media users. On the other hand, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg saw his personal wealth decreased by \$31 billion, dropping three places in the top 10 billionaire's index.

The losses come in the wake of a series of developments, among them skyrocketing expenses with Meta's \$10 billion investment in augmented and virtual reality hardware to build its "metaverse," a predicted loss of \$10 billion in advertising revenue in 2022 due to anti-tracking changes in Apple iPhones, and growing competition from rival social media applications such as TikTok. Facebook user growth has long-stalled in North America and Europe, and the company has been relying on the addition of new users from other places in the world, such as in its biggest market India, where user growth has slowed down due to an increase in internet data package pricing in 2021.

### References:

Geske, D. (2022, February). How much money did Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg lose this week as Meta's shares tanked? International Business Times. <https://www.ibtimes.com/how-much-money-did-facebooks-mark-zuckerberg-lose-week-metas-shares-tanked-3390591>

Molina, B., Guynn, J. (2022, February 3). Facebook is losing users for the first time ever and shares in Meta have fallen off a cliff. USA TODAY. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2022/02/03/facebook-users-decline-meta-stock/6651329001/>

Image attribute: <https://mashable.com/article/facebook-zuckerberg-losing>



Image by Аззам Гайсун from Pixabay

## Amidst Boycotts and Controversy, China Winter Olympics 2022 First Ever To Take Place On 100 Percent Artificial Snow

The 2022 Winter Olympics was held in Beijing, China, between 4-20 February 2022, amidst Covid-related restrictions on public attendance and a host of concerns and controversies related to human rights violations that resulted in the boycotts and non-participation of various nations. Interestingly, the 2022 Winter Games also set another new record - it took place on completely artificial man-made snow, an issue of concern for both environmentalists and athletes.

In light of concerns raised on Beijing human rights violations in Xinjiang and heavy-handed repression of protests in Hong Kong, several countries, including the US, Britain, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, India, Kosovo, and Lithuania, announced a diplomatic boycott of the Games. Chinese leaders and media condemned the boycotts as being politically motivated, warning that they “would pay the price for their mistaken acts.” However, athletes from these countries were still allowed to participate in the games, a move welcomed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

The Games took place on one hundred per cent man-made artificial snow made from frozen water droplets pushed through a snow cannon at high speed. The snowmaking infrastructure consisted of eight water cooling towers, 130 fan-driven snow generators, and around 300 snowmaking guns to make enough snow to cover the planned competition area of around 800,000 square meters (about 8.6 million square feet), which raised concerns about both the significant drain on water and energy resources in one of the world’s most water-scarce regions. Moreover, athletes have also complained about the hazardous nature of man-made snow, which is icier and thus faster and more dangerous for falling athletes.

### References:

China’s Olympics kick off with pomp, circumstance, lockdowns and boycotts. (2022, 4 February). VOA. <https://www.voanews.com/a/olympic-opening-ceremony-set-for-friday/6426338.html>

Full list of every country boycotting China’s Winter Olympics. (2021, 15 December). Newsweek. <https://www.newsweek.com/every-country-staging-diplomatic-boycott-chinas-winter-olympics-1657177>

This year’s Winter Olympics first ever to take place on 100 percent artificial snow. (2022, 4 February). IFLScience. <https://www.iflscience.com/environment/this-years-winter-olympics-will-be-first-ever-to-take-place-on-100-percent-artificial-snow/>

## Contributing Editors

Mohammad Hossain

Dr Nazmus Sakib

Dr Faroque Amin



THE FUTURE INSTITUTE

[www.tfiuk.org](http://www.tfiuk.org)