



THE FUTURE

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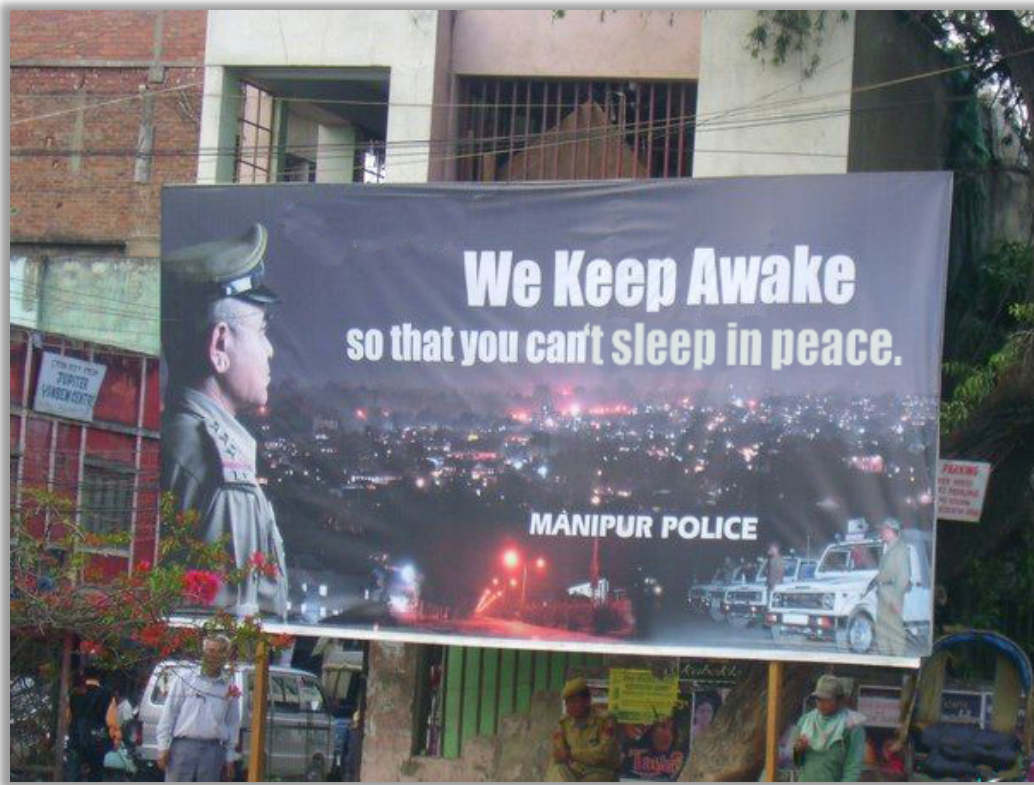
This newsletter aims to chronicle the major events and developments in the societies of the emerging nations with the potential of impacting their future. This publication offers snippets of news analysis that might be advantageous to the academics, policymakers, social and political workers, students and various organisations.

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Persecution of Muslims and violent unrest in Manipur in India under BJP misrule

The Indian social fabric has been in tatters for some time now, largely as a result of anti-Muslim policies by the ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). July saw several shocking incidents of hate and mob violence against the country's Muslims in various states, with several of the victims dead in the process. An imam, Mohammad Saad, 22, was attacked and shot to death in a mosque at Gurgaon, Haryana, by a rightwing Hindu mob of more than 100 men, who later burned down the mosque. In Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, a young Muslim doctor was walking home when she was attacked by an armed mob of Hindu men who battered and molested her. However, in the most shocking instance of hate crime, a railway officer named Chetan Singh boarded a train bound for Mumbai from Maharashtra, killed his supervisor and then prowled the carriages for targets, whereby he singled out and killed three Muslim passengers while shouting slogans in favour of Modi and Yogi Adityanath. As India prepares for an election next year, with Modi projected to win a third term, many fear that such outbreaks of violence may worsen as the pursuit of electoral triumphs further divides society along religious lines.

In another instance highlighting BJP misrule and maladministration, a viral video from the Indian state of Manipur of dozens of men parading and sexually assaulting two naked women sparked outrage. The incident occurred on 4 May, a day after deadly ethnic riots erupted between the mainly Hindu Meitei and predominantly Christian Kuki-Zo tribes in the remote northeastern Indian state governed by the BJP, and only recently surfaced after a two-month internet ban was lifted. The Meiteis, who make up more than half of Manipur's 3.5 million people, live primarily in Imphal and the prosperous valley surrounding it, while the Kuki-Zo and Naga tribes live in the neighbouring hill regions. The women in the video belonged to the Kuki-Zo tribe, whereas the perpetrators belonged to the Meiteis. At least 130 people have been killed, the majority of them are Kuki-Zo, and over 50,000 have been displaced since violence between the two tribes erupted over a proposal to grant the Meiteis reservation in government positions and education. The central Modi government has been heavily criticised for its silence and inaction in the face of the violence, particularly given that the BJP governs Manipur.

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Pakistan secures IMF deal as Saudi Arabia and UAE help

After the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a standby agreement for a bailout of \$3bn for the ailing Pakistani economy, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have sent Pakistan a total of \$3bn in financial support this month. Earlier, Saudi Arabia had pledged \$2bn in funds to Islamabad back in April but had held off delivering the money until after it was clear an IMF bailout was in the works. The crisis-hit nation will get about \$1.2bn from the IMF upfront, with the rest due to be paid out over the next nine months. This comes amidst the Pakistani government's promise to impose painful fiscal discipline measures; the IMF expects Islamabad to ensure a tight monetary policy aimed at disinflation and further progress on structural reforms, particularly in the energy sector, state-owned enterprises governance and climate resilience.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the IMF deal was a lifeline for Pakistan and a major step towards helping the government stabilise the economy. This is the 13th IMF bailout Pakistan has received since the 1980s, and it came after eight months of tough negotiations over fiscal discipline. Sherif said the bailout was a major step forward in the government's efforts to stabilise the economy and achieve macroeconomic stability. Currently, Pakistan faces one of the worst financial crises in its history and is at risk of defaulting because of the massive external debts it owes; the country's foreign reserves were hovering around \$4bn prior to the bailout, and the Pakistani currency has lost around 20 per cent of its value against the dollar this year alone.

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Global food prices set to rise as Russia withdraws from grain deal and India caps rice exports

A global food crisis is looming on the horizon with two consecutive developments - the Russian withdrawal from the Ukraine grain deal and the Indian ban on certain rice exports. Despite extending the deal several times over the past months, Russia refused to renew the grain deal any further, saying that conditions agreed upon previously had not been met. After the grain deal expired on 17 July, Russia launched a series of air attacks on Ukraine's ports, destroying an estimated 60,000 tonnes of grain. The end of the deal has already significantly impacted international food markets, with wheat prices jumping dramatically on both the European and US wholesale markets.

On the other hand, in an effort to avoid domestic price increases, India has banned the export of non-basmati white rice. According to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, non-basmati white grain currently accounts for almost a quarter of India's rice exports. Experts have warned that the action could raise global food costs. Food supplies are already under strain as a result of Russia's withdrawal from a treaty assuring the safe passage of Ukrainian commodities, particularly wheat, earlier this week. India is the world's largest rice exporter, accounting for more than 40% of total global shipments. Non-basmati rice is mostly exported to Asian and African countries.

Unsurprisingly, July's export prohibition has fueled fears of skyrocketing worldwide rice prices. According to IMF senior economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas, the restriction will drive up costs, and global grain prices might climb by up to 15% this year. The FAO Food Price Index, which analyses monthly changes in international prices of regularly traded food commodities, rose 1.3% in July compared to June, owing to higher rice and vegetable oil prices. In the meantime, international wheat prices jumped 1.6% in July compared to June, while rice prices jumped 2.8% month on month in July and 19.7% year on year, reaching their highest level since September 2011, according to FAO.

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Remembering anniversaries - Srebrenica massacre and the July coup in Turkey

July is a month of pain in Turkey and the Balkan region. It is well known for the anniversaries of the 1995 Srebrenica genocide of Muslims in Bosnia and the 15 July anti-democracy coup attempt in Türkiye in 2016. 11 July marks the 28th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide in what was the most brutal phase of the three-and-a-half-year Bosnian genocide perpetrated by Bosnian Serb forces from 1992 to 1995. During this time, Bosnian Serb forces, led by Radovan Karadžić, sought to create an ethnically homogeneous Greater Serbia by ethnically cleansing non-Serb populations, and the worst atrocity occurred in July 1995 in Srebrenica, where over 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were killed. Eventually, NATO intervention and the signing of the Dayton Agreement in 1995 ended the war, although the international community's response was criticised for being slow and ineffective in preventing large-scale bloodshed. In the following years, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague indicted a few individuals responsible for war crimes, including genocide. Despite this, genocide denial among Bosnian Serbs is a big issue today, and they are aided by the ICTY's method of prosecuting individuals for specific acts and crimes, which establishes a pattern in which subsequent court verdicts recognised genocide only in Srebrenica while failing to address the same crime committed across Bosnia.

Another infamous incident in July is the anti-democratic coup attempt in 2016 in Türkiye, where a faction within the Turkish military attempted to overthrow the civilian government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. On the night of 15 July 2016, the coup plotters tried to seize control of key institutions and infrastructure, including the Turkish parliament, government buildings, media outlets, and bridges in Istanbul. The coup attempt resulted in clashes between the coup plotters and loyalist forces, leading to the deaths of hundreds of people and injuries to thousands. The government swiftly responded to the coup attempt, calling on the people through various public communication channels to take to the streets to resist the military's actions. Mass protests erupted, with thousands of citizens demonstrating their support for the elected government and resisting the coup attempt, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of brave civilians. The Turkish authorities have accused the Gülen movement, led by Fethullah Gülen, a U.S.-based Islamic cleric, of orchestrating the coup. Analysts have opined that the night of 15 July 2016 marked the beginning of a new era in Türkiye, a transformation of Turkish politics which entailed the adoption of a presidential system and encouraged the country to pursue a more active national security and foreign policy.

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EU and Tunisia sign anti-migrant deal

Tunisia and the European Union signed a “strategic partnership” deal that included combatting human traffickers and tightening borders, as agencies note a sharp increase in the number of boats leaving the North African nation for Europe. The deal followed weeks of talks and Europe’s pledge of major aid to Tunisia amounting to €1bn (\$1.12bn) to help its battered economy, rescue state finances and deal with a migration crisis. Among strong backers of the deal is far-right Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who made a visit to Tunis last month accompanied by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Dutch Prime Minister Marc Rutte to meet with Tunisian President Kais Saied on bilateral issues, among them economic aid and migration, which ultimately led to the current deal.

Moreover, the EU deal comes in the aftermath of the migrant boat tragedy in the Mediterranean last month, where hundreds of migrants lost their lives while attempting to make the perilous sea journey to Greece. Experts, however, have opined that it is clear that for the EU, the economic picture is secondary to its primary objective of “securing” European borders and curbing the influx of irregular migrants from North Africa. For the Tunisian authorities, it provides the opportunity to increase the hold on power and enact harsh policies with impunity. According to the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights, Tunisia is neither logistically nor legally qualified to be a safe third nation for migrants. Amidst all this, hate speech and racism towards Sub-Saharan migrants have been on the rise in Tunisia, fueled by the EU’s migration policy and discourse. According to various rights groups, Tunisian security had earlier forces expelled hundreds of Black African people from Sfax, a key access point to Europe for many people attempting to cross the Mediterranean to the border region with Libya.

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Turkey approves Swedish NATO membership

Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg recently announced that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had, in effect, agreed to allow Sweden's Nato membership bid to move forward in the Turkish parliament. According to a Turkish official speaking to Bloomberg News, Erdogan made his decision after getting a variety of assurances, including Stockholm's approach to supporters of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) operating on its territory. However, a report by Middle East Eye suggested deeper developments behind the scenes which could have helped change Erdogan's mind. Sources close to the talks between Turkiye and its Western allies say that US assurances on fighter jets and Ottawa dropping its weapons ban were the primary reasons behind why the Turkish president changed his mind. The sources say that the deal with Biden included 40 new aircraft and kits to overhaul 79 of Turkey's existing F-16 fleet, as well as more than 900 air-to-air missiles and 800 bombs. The second issue was Canada agreeing to drop its arms embargo against Turkiye; the Turkish defence industry heavily relied on Canadian advanced drone optics such as Wescam Optics for its drone technology.

An additional development in the weeks before the decision was Erdogan's request during a phone call with Biden that top EU leaders and countries should release statements of support for Turkiye joining the European Union and reviving accession talks that have been on ice for years. In the follow-up to Erdogan's agreement regarding Sweden, Turkiye received assurances from the EU President and Sweden, including on modernising the EU-Turkey customs union and liberalising visa application processes from the latter. Last year, Turkey, Sweden, and Finland signed a trilateral memorandum of understanding (MOU) to address a number of concerns related to terrorism and arms embargoes. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Scandinavian countries have competed for Nato membership. Ankara accepted Finland's Nato membership earlier this year but held off on Sweden, citing the country's tolerance of anti-Turkey marches and the serial burning of the Quran by far-right groups.

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Israeli intelligence and cyber-crime firms act as agents of chaos around the globe

Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT) has exposed a “ghost” cell of 56 operatives spying on non-Turkish nationals on behalf of Israeli intelligence agency Mossad. The counterintelligence unit apprehended seven people who confessed to working for Mossad. The spies gathered biographical intelligence through online routing, tracked vehicle movements, hacked into password-protected networks, and found private locations. They also followed targets determined by Mossad to surveil and photograph one-on-one meetings. The cell used fake websites in Arabic to obtain technical locations and real IP addresses. Last December, MIT exposed another group of seven people spying on Palestinians for Mossad, which used their intelligence to launch online defamation campaigns and threats against Palestinians.

Apart from official intelligence agencies, Israel is host to numerous private intelligence groups, cyber security agencies and disinformation firms which offer their services to the highest bidder, including but not limited to hacking, tapping, extortion, blackmail, and even election interference. Among these are well-known names such as phone hacking software Pegasus and the firm Cellebrite, which sold its products to several countries accused of abuses against human rights activists and minority groups, including Russia, the Philippines, and Bangladesh among others. These have often been implicated in corrupting democracies around the globe, as well as in targeting human rights defenders and political opposition. According to a recent Haaretz report, Pakistani authorities have been using Israeli phone-hacking spyware since 2012, using Israeli firm Cellebrite products to enable hacking into password-protected mobile phones, stealing stored information, including text messages, contacts, pictures, and documents.

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Twitter is now X – what to expect?

The world has now shifted into the post-Twitter era, both literally and metaphorically. Elon Musk just rebranded Twitter, replacing its famous bird emblem with an X. Musk's ambition for an "everything" app dubbed X, where users may chat, shop, consume entertainment, and more, was laid out when he purchased Twitter late last year. However, despite Musk's long-held intentions, Twitter still has a long way to go if he wants to develop the kinds of services WeChat is known for, not to mention the financial and competitive obstacles the company has just by existing, let alone embarking on a significant expansion. It's also unclear how much demand there is for such a super app outside of China, considering that other platforms' efforts in this regard have been difficult to gain traction.

Instagram parent company Meta has attempted to cash in on the confusion surrounding Musk's vision with Twitter by launching its own competition to Twitter called Threads on 5 July. The hype around the launch and user dissatisfaction with Elon Musk's Twitter helped Threads attain many new users, surpassing 100 million user sign-ups in less than a week. However, user engagement on Threads has quickly slowed down as users have complained of excessive spam, the bane of the existence of the social media world. While many have been asking what these developments might mean in the long run, one thing which can safely be said is that with Elon Musk's vision of a WeChat-like X app-for-everything, the days of Twitter as a place of happening, a regulated platform of engagement and townhouse-like discussion are clearly at an end.

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