

# EURASIA DIGEST

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## France's Presidency of the EU

France assumed the [presidency](#) of the Council of European Union on 1 January, 2022. President Macron laid out an ambitious agenda, highlighting the motto ‘Recovery Power and Belonging’. EU’s sovereignty and strategic autonomy, building a European model for growth, adopting a Strategic Compass and focusing on the Indo Pacific appears as the main pillars of the Presidency. Incidentally, France prioritizes European Union’s ties with India and hopes to expand strategic ties with India in the Indo Pacific.

In an online event on 22 February, 2022, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian announced the hosting of [Paris Forum](#); a ministerial meeting focused on the Indo-Pacific. The forum would focus on global challenges, defence and security concerns connectivity and digital issues. Indian External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar was also present at the event.

## Germany Assumes G7 Presidency

Germany took over the annual [G7 presidency](#) from United Kingdom on 1 January, 2022. This grouping comprises of the seven most industrialised nations in the world. Given the strong presence of the Green party in Germany’s domestic politics, the G7 presidency would also focus on a climate policy and meeting targets set at COP-26. To achieve tangible outcomes on climate, Germany will have to work with China- the biggest emitter of Green House Gases.

## Protests in Kazakhstan amidst sharp rise in the Liquefied Petroleum Gas

On 3 January 2022, hundreds of people in the western [Kazakh region](#) of Mangystau protested against a sudden hike in prices of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) used in vehicles. More than 1,000 people rallied in

the town of Zhanaozen’s complaining that the price increase will lead to rising costs of food. Dozens of demonstrators voiced their anger in Aqtaw, the regional administrative center.

On 4 January 2022, the [protests](#) spread to the country’s commercial capital Almaty where the protests led to clashes with the riot police. As the situation deteriorated, the president had to declare a state of emergency in the country.

On 5 January 2022, the protestors demanded the [resignation](#) of the government. President Qasym Jomart-Tokayev conceded to their demands and in accordance with Article 70 of the Kazakh Constitution accepted the resignation of the government.

The protests came to a halt by 7 January 2022, after the intervention of the CSTO troops. President Tokayev indicated that the [law and order](#) situation had improved and peace restored in all parts of Kazakhstan.

## CSTO troops complete their withdrawal from Kazakhstan

Troops of the [Collective Security Treaty Organization](#) (CSTO) have completed their withdrawal from Kazakhstan, where they were invited by the Central Asian nation’s government in the wake of deadly protests in the country in early January. The [withdrawal](#) commenced on 13 January 2022 after peace was restored in the country.

## Sweden and Finland rearm strategically located islands in the Baltic Sea sparking speculation of joining NATO.

[Sweden](#) is reinforcing its military presence by deploying armoured combat vehicles like the [HIMARS and troops](#) on [Gotland Island](#), which is Sweden’s closest territory to Russia. It is located strategically in the Baltic Sea that is only 300 km away from

## Russia's Baltic Fleet Headquarters at Kaliningrad.

Finland is also contemplating rearming its island Aland in the Baltic Sea. Finland on 10 December 2021 announced a purchase of nearly \$10 billion worth of American-made military aircraft and weaponry, namely in the form of F-35 fighter jets. Both these Scandinavian countries are not members of NATO and are worried about a security breach and possible Russian aggression in that area.

## Russia, China and Iran Hold Military Exercises in the Indian Ocean

Russia, China and Iran conducted a three day joint naval exercise in the Indian Ocean from 21-23 January 2022. An Iranian naval official has said that the aim of the exercise was to reinforce "common security". It took place against the backdrop of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's official visit to Moscow, where he stated that Tehran has "no limits for expanding ties with Russia." A similar view was expressed by President Putin.

## China's President Xi Jinping chaired a Virtual Summit between China and the Central Asian Countries

On 25 January 2022, Chinese President Xi Jinping chaired a virtual summit to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between China and Central Asian Countries in Beijing. All five Central Asian Presidents attended the virtual meeting. The main focus of the meeting was to build a closer community with a shared future and pledged to build a cooperation belt for high-quality development, and offer assistance to advance the Global Development Initiative. The Central Asian leaders also promised to support the 'One China' policy in a joint statement.

## Russia and Ukraine Agree to Maintain Ceasefire, New Round of Talks in February

Moscow and Kyiv agreed during their talks in Paris on 26 January 2022 to maintain the existing ceasefire in eastern Ukraine in a move hailed by a French diplomat as sending a "good signal." The Kremlin's envoy Dmitry Kozak said the main outcome of the four-way talks, also involving France and Germany, was the decision to host the next round of discussions in Berlin in February.

## India hosts the 1st India-Central Asia Summit

At the initiative of the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, the Presidents of the five Central Asian Republics attended the first India-Central Asia Summit on 27 January 2022 in the virtual format. The main focus of the Summit was to build a long term comprehensive and enduring India-Central Asia partnership based on mutual trust, understanding and friendship. Key discussions on improving land connectivity, trade and security also took place during the meet.

## Russia Says It Wants 'Respectful' Ties With U.S.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said that the Kremlin "wants good, equal, and mutually respectful relations with the United States, like with every country in the world". He added that Russia does not want to remain in a position "where our security is infringed daily." Tensions have escalated between Moscow and Washington after Western governments accused Russia of amassing troops on its border with Ukraine, which has sparked fears of an imminent Russian invasion. Citing the encroachment of NATO near its eastern borders, Russia has put forth security demands to the US and NATO, which appear to have been rejected by the West.