

# EURASIA DIGEST

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## **President Mirziyoyev Meets Xi Jinping**

During his visit to attend the Winter Olympics in Beijing, Shavkat Mirziyoyev met with [Xi Jinping](#). Xi called on both sides to consolidate and strengthen bilateral comprehensive cooperation. He hailed the development of China-Uzbek relations in the past 30 years. He appreciated the adherence to equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit, promoting mutual cooperation. Xi asserted China as a reliable friend and partner of Uzbekistan. This was a new step in the China-Uzbek relationship.

## **Turkmenistan to Conduct Early Presidential Elections**

Turkmenistan will hold an early [presidential election](#) on 12 March 2022, an official with the Central Election Commission said on 12 February 2022. Berdimuhamedov announced in an extraordinary meeting of the upper chamber of parliament that he intends to step aside to make space for “young leaders”. There are speculations that he is preparing to hand over the reins of Turkmenistan to his son.

These elections could see a succession of the Berdimuhamedov dynasty and the continuation of an authoritarian regime in the country.

## **Russia Conducts Military Exercises in Tajikistan**

On 14 February 2022, the 201st [military base](#) of Russia began exercises in Tajikistan involving the attack helicopters and S-300PS long-range air defense systems. The base has gained further importance after Taliban took over the political leadership in Afghanistan. Russian military reported on

strengthening the base by replacing combat vehicles of earlier modifications with 30 modernized T-72B3M tanks.

## **U.S. Embassy Provides Training Facility Improvements**

On 22 February 2022, [United States Ambassador](#) to Tajikistan, John Mark Pommersheim and Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Major General of militia Rahmonzoda Saidnakhsh Hakim attended the handover ceremony in Romit, Tajikistan.

US \$745,543 construction project for the OMON (special police unit) funded by the U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe was handed over. The US has partnered with Tajikistan for 30 years and has provided \$1.8 billion in development and security assistance. It involves programs supporting Tajikistan’s security, civil society and economic development.

## **Kazakhstan and Iran Discuss Trade Cooperation**

Kazakhstan and Iran reaffirmed their readiness to [increase cooperation](#) in trade at a meeting held in Tehran on 22 February 2022. It was attended by Kazakh Minister of Trade and Integration, Bakhyt Sultanov and Iranian First Vice President, Mohammad Reza Mokhber Dezfouli.

Being a key trading and economic partner, cooperation with Iran is amongst the top priorities of Kazakhstan’s foreign policy. During the meeting both sides discussed opportunities for cooperation in banking, logistics, mining industry as well as the joint use of the sea and dry ports of the countries.

## **Uzbekistan and Pakistan Discuss Regional Security**

Uzbek [Deputy Prime Minister](#), Sardor Umurzakov met with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, General Nadim Raza, in Rawalpindi on 23 February 2022. The parties stressed on the high level of strategic partnership between the two countries. They expressed readiness for further interaction to strengthen cooperation and ensure security and stability in the region. Current state of the economic partnership was discussed and cooperation in the field of counter international terrorism, extremism and ensuring regional security was considered.

## **Russia Announces Military Operation in Ukraine**

On 24 February 2022, Russian President Vladimir [Putin](#) called on Ukrainian soldiers to lay down their arms. He emphasised on seeking a "demilitarisation" of the former Soviet state but not its occupation. Putin's announcement came after the Kremlin said rebel leaders in eastern Ukraine had asked Moscow for military help against Kyiv. The Russian President has set out a number of conditions for de-escalation, including Ukraine becoming a neutral state.

More ominously, he has stated that "the current authorities must understand that if they continue to do what they are doing, they are putting in question the [future of Ukrainian statehood](#)". [He has also warned](#) Ukraine's neighbours against hosting Kyiv's military aircraft, saying they could end up being involved in an armed conflict with Russia.

## **Russian Central Bank Unveils Emergency Support**

Russia's [stock markets have plunged](#) after it launched military operations in Ukraine. The benchmark MOEX index as well as the Russian rouble have fallen by more than 35 per cent amidst unprecedented Western sanctions on the Russian economy. The Central Bank of Russia has sought to tackle the volatility by implementing capital controls. Meanwhile, retailers in Russia will [limit sales of essential foodstuffs](#) to limit black market speculation.

## **EU's Off Budget to Provide Military Aid**

Russia's military aggression against Ukraine has met with EU announcing [€500M](#) million in arms and other aid to Ukraine. It is a [first time](#) for the EU to finance the purchase and delivery of weapons and other equipment to a country that is under attack. Due to the restrictions of EU treaties, it has announced an off budget called "[European Peace Facility](#)" with a ceiling of €5 billion that can be used to provide military aid. Owing to the crisis, EU has closed the airspace to Russian airlines, including private jets.

## **U.S.-Russia Tensions Spill Into Space**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has placed a question mark over the future of the [International Space Station](#), long a symbol of post-Cold War cooperation. Russian space agency head Dmitry Rogozin has stated that U.S. sanctions could "destroy our cooperation" and that the research platform would plummet to the Earth without Russia's help.

## **A Shift in German Defence Position**

[Germany](#) has shifted its position on major foreign and defence topics, ranging from arms deliveries, defence spending, sanctions and diplomacy. So far, it had been the key player in co-opting its transatlantic ties and business interests alongside a massive reliance on Russian gas. It strongly supported dialogue under the Normandy Format and refused to deliver defensive weaponry to Ukraine under its “peace policy”. Changing its previous course, Germany has now announced to send 1000 anti-tank weapons and 500 missiles to Ukraine.

## **Nord Stream 2 AG Lays Off the Entire Workforce**

Rumours about [Nord Stream 2 AG](#), the company behind the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, filing for bankruptcy are unfounded but it has laid off the entire workforce. On 22 February, German Chancellor announced that certification of Nord Stream 2 has been stopped, owing to the Russian recognition of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. Following that U.S. also imposed sanctions on Nord Stream 2 AG. The Swiss based company, wholly owned by the Russian energy giant Gazprom, made the decision after [SWIFT sanctions](#) were imposed by the west.

## **Sweden and Finland Drifting Towards NATO**

For the first time since WW-2 Swedish society is showing [polarised trends](#) over joining NATO. A recent survey operated by the Novus agency revealed that 37% of Swedish citizens are in favour, while 35%

take the opposite position and 28% remain undecided. A similar poll released by the Finnish Broadcasting Company also showed its [drift towards NATO](#). 53% supported joining the alliance and 66% supported NATO membership if Sweden joins at the same time. This has been touted as yet another sign of the [tectonic shifts](#) in European security landscape.

## **AIIB Halts Lending to Russia and Belarus**

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has said that it will [suspend business](#) related to Russia and Belarus. It stated that "in the best interests of the bank, management has decided that all activities relating to Russia and Belarus are on hold and under review." Notably, Russia is among the AIIB's founding members and holds around a 6 per cent vote in its operations, the third-biggest after China and India. Meanwhile, the New Development Bank has also "put new transactions in Russia on hold."

## **Moscow Seeks U.S. Guarantees Before Backing Iran Nuclear Deal**

Russian Foreign Minister [Sergei Lavrov](#) has said that Moscow is demanding guarantees from the U.S. before backing the Iran nuclear deal, citing the current wave of Western sanctions against Russia. Lavrov said that Moscow had to ask the U.S. for guarantees first, requiring a "clear answer" that the new sanctions will not affect its rights under the nuclear deal.