

# EURASIA DIGEST

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- **Prime Minister Modi Visited Europe**
- **Uzbek-Indian Foreign Ministries Consultations**
- **Clashes in Gorno-Badakhshan**
- **Russia Not Threatened by NATO Expansion**
- **Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan Cooperation**
- **Turkey and Croatia Block Sweden and Finland NATO Membership**
- **Russia Cuts Off Gas Supply to Finland**
- **Russia to Make Foreign Debt Payments in Rubles**
- **Russian Lawmakers Scrap Upper Age Limit for Military Service**
- **Russia's Central Bank Slashes Interest Rate for Third Time as Rouble Strengthens**
- **India's NSA Visited Dushanbe for Security Dialogue**
- **Tajikistan President Visited Iran**
- **Europe Agrees to Russian Oil Embargo**

## **Prime Minister Modi Visited Europe**

Prime Minister Modi visited [Europe](#) from 2-4 May 2022. The Prime Minister held bilateral meetings with German Chancellor-Olaf Scholz, Danish Prime Minister-Mette Frederiksen, French President-Emmanuel Macron and leaders of the Nordic states. Discussions across meetings revolved around major themes like Russia-Ukraine crisis, blue economy, shipping, green and sustainable growth and cooperation over migration and mobility. India signed the green and sustainable partnership with Germany and the two leaders co-chaired the 6<sup>th</sup> Inter-Governmental Consultations. During the last leg of his tour the Prime Minister visited France. The leaders discussed greater cooperation in western Indo Pacific, agriculture mission, counter-terrorism, cyber security etc. This visit comes at a stage when Europe has a crisis at its doorstep and is looking east for greater cooperation.

## **Uzbek-Indian Foreign Ministries Consultations**

On 11 May 2022, Delhi [hosted](#) the 15<sup>th</sup> round of political consultations between the Foreign Ministers of both countries. The main focus of the meeting was on various areas of cooperation including strengthening of the friendship and strategic partnership, expanding cooperation in the field of trade, politics, cultural and investment. The delegation was headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Furqat Sidiqov. The Deputy Foreign Minister also paid a visit to the prominent Indian Think Tank the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA).

## **Clashes in Gorno-Badakhshan**

On 16 May 2022 [clashes](#) erupted in the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Region in Tajikistan. Reports state that eight protestors and one policeman have lost their lives in the violent clashes that began in the capital Khorog. The protestors are of the Pamiri descent.

The protests are linked to an earlier protest in November 2021 which saw one individual lose his life. The people are angry with as Tajik officials have refused to yield to their demands which included a probe into the killing of the individual in the November protest by the police. There are also demands to release of several activists who have been jailed or detained and the resignation of the local Governor and Mayor. The situation is [complicated](#) with the killing of a local Pamiri leader Mamadbokir Mamadbokirov. This has put any chance for an enduring resolution even further out of reach.

## **Russia Not Threatened by NATO Expansion**

On 16 May 2022 [President Vladimir Putin](#) speaking at the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) summit in Moscow, said that while Russia “doesn’t have problems” with Sweden and Finland. Their bid to join NATO is not seen as a threat however, the expansion of NATO’s military infrastructure across their territory may “trigger a response”.

## **Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan Cooperation**

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan on 17 May 2022 [planned to increase](#) trade and economic cooperation and expand joint

projects in industry, transport, agriculture, education, water and energy sectors. The two countries set an ambitious goal for themselves to increase the bilateral trade turnover to \$10 billion in the next five years and to achieve that goal, they have adopted an action plan consisting of 41 measures. This decision comes after the two nations decided to cooperate on [space exploration](#) on 11 May 2022. It is designed to boost cooperation between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

### **Turkey and Croatia Block Sweden and Finland NATO Membership**

Recep Tayyip Erdogan on 18 May 2022 has blocked an early attempt by [NATO](#) to fast-track Finland and Sweden's applications. He said that their membership will make the alliance "a place where representatives of terrorist organizations are concentrated."

The tussle here is that Finland had joined Sweden and other EU countries in halting weapons sales to Turkey in 2019, over Ankara's military action against Kurdish groups in Syria.

Turkey is joined by Croatia who on 18 May 2022 has [called](#) for the country's NATO representative, Mario Nobile, to block Finland and Sweden's NATO move until Bosnia and Herzegovina's electoral law is changed. The President stated "That is not an act against Finland and Sweden but it is for Croatia." He further emphasized, "Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina are more important to me than the entire Russian- Finish border."

### **Russia Cuts Off Gas Supply to Finland**

In the latest escalation of energy payment disputes, Russia halted [gas exports](#) to

Finland from 22 May 2022. Owing to the sanctions imposed on Moscow, Russia demanded that European countries pay for their gas purchases in rubles. On Finland's denial to do so, Russia stopped gas flows, just the way it did with Poland and Bulgaria.

To replace Russian gas, Finland has announced to charter a storage and regasification vessel from US, which will be commissioned till the end of this year. This is happening at a time when Sweden and Finland, staunch supporters of the neutrality bloc have filed for NATO memberships.

### **Russia to Make Foreign Debt Payments in Rubles**

Russia on 25 May 2022 said that it will start paying its [foreign debt in rubles](#) after the United States ended an exemption that allowed Moscow to make the payments in dollars held in Russia. Russia had last defaulted on its foreign currency debt in 1918, when Bolshevik revolution leader Vladimir Lenin refused to recognize the obligations of the deposed Tsarist regime.

### **Russian Lawmakers Scrap Upper Age Limit for Military Service**

On May 25 2022 [Russian lawmakers](#) adopted a bill scrapping upper age limits for those wishing to enter military service, prompting speculation that the country could be scrambling to bolster its depleted manpower amid the war in Ukraine. Russian law currently allows any citizen aged 18 to 40 to join the Armed Forces by signing a contract. The bill must now be signed by President Vladimir Putin to formally become a law.

## **Russia's Central Bank Slashes Interest Rate for Third Time as Rouble Strengthens**

[Russia's Central Bank](#) has cut its key interest rate from 14 to 11 per cent at an emergency meeting held on 26 May 2022, as Russia seeks to rein in the surging rouble. The Bank had earlier raised the interest rates to 20 per cent amidst the war in Ukraine. The rouble has staged a rebound and is currently trading at 4-year highs against the U.S. dollar.

## **India's NSA Visited Dushanbe for Security Dialogue**

The Fourth [Security Dialogue](#) on Afghanistan took place in Dushanbe, Tajikistan on 27 May 2022. India's National Security Advisor (NSA) Mr. Ajit Doval attended the event. Other participating NSA's included Russia, China, Iran, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and the host Tajikistan.

In his address Mr Doval, [stated](#) "India has historical and civilisational relations with Afghanistan and New Delhi has always stood by the people of Afghanistan and it will continue to guide India's approach". He further stated that "There is a need for all present at the Dialogue to enhance the capability of Afghanistan to counter terrorism and terrorist groups which pose a threat to regional peace and security. He stressed that India is an important stakeholder in Afghanistan.

## **Tajikistan President Visited Iran**

Emomali Rahmon, President of Tajikistan on 29 May 2022, [visited](#) Tehran on an official visit. The visit is significant since it is the first visit to Iran by Rahmon after a

period of nine years. Other members include the ministers of foreign affairs, economic development and trade, finance and energy and water resources. With Iran gaining an observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation this would assist in further improvement of cooperation between the two nations. This visit comes after Iran's Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Mohammed Bagheri [visited](#) Tajikistan on 16 May 2022 to discuss on expanding military and defence cooperation with Tajikistan.

## **Europe Agrees to Russian Oil Embargo**

On 30 May 2022, the [leaders](#) of the European Union agreed to cutting a large majority of the Russian oil imports over the next six months. The oil embargo is tied up in a new package of sanctions that will also target Russia's biggest bank and state media outlets accused of spreading propaganda. The watered-down embargo covers only Russian oil brought into Europe by sea, allowing a temporary exemption for imports delivered by pipeline. The European Union aims to cut Russian oil imports by 90% by year-end.