

Far and Wide

Every week we share selection of six news from six continents that we believe will impact our world in the near or distinct future

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BRICS Countries Call for a Global Rebalancing Away from Western Nations

Welcome to our eighth edition of the newsletter, Far and Wide, where we bring a collection of interesting stories from around the world. Our lead story this week focuses on the recent meeting of foreign ministers from the BRICS group of nations, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, held in South Africa. The BRICS countries have collectively called for a rebalancing of the global order, shifting away from the dominance of Western nations. In the midst of geopolitical tension, inequality, and global insecurity, the vision of the BRICS group is to provide global leadership, offering an alternative perspective to the established G7 group of developed nations. However, these discussions have been clouded by allegations of Russian war crimes in Ukraine, with the International Criminal Court (ICC) issuing an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin. The presence of the Russian Foreign Minister at the meeting sparked protests, highlighting the complexities faced by South Africa, a member of the court. With a combined population of over 3.2 billion people, representing about 40% of the world's population, the BRICS countries aim to address the challenges arising from the economic concentration that leaves many nations at the mercy of a few. The ministers emphasize the importance of a multipolar world order that reflects the needs and aspirations of developing countries. They also explore possibilities for expanding the BRICS group to provide assistance to emerging economies and developing nations. This story raises crucial questions about the global order, the role of influential nations, and the pursuit of a more balanced and inclusive world.

We hope you find this edition thought-provoking and informative.

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Africa

BRICS Countries Call for a Global Rebalancing Away from Western Nations

The foreign ministers of the BRICS group of nations, consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, have called for a rebalancing of the global order away from Western nations. South African Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor emphasized the group's vision of providing global leadership in a world characterized by geopolitical tensions, inequality, and insecurity. The BRICS, seen as an alternative to the G7 group, aims to reflect the needs and devices of developing countries. However, allegations of Russian war crimes in Ukraine have overshadowed the talks, as the International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin. South Africa, as an ICC member, would be obliged to arrest him if he attends the BRICS summit scheduled for August. The gathering discussed the need for a multipolar world order and economic concentration that leaves many nations at the mercy of a few. Protests against Russia's foreign minister took place at the event, highlighting concerns about the ICC case and South Africa's historical ties with Russia. The South African government is reportedly considering options, including changing laws or moving the summit to another country, to avoid the diplomatic predicament.

Source: BBC

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-65784030>



Europe

EU Countries Push to Dilute Nature Restoration Targets

European Union (EU) countries are seeking to dilute certain targets in the bloc's flagship nature law by introducing loopholes, according to a draft document. The proposed law aims to establish binding targets for countries to restore damaged natural environments and improve the health of Europe's habitats. However, some EU lawmakers and government leaders, including those in France, Belgium, and Ireland, have opposed the law. The draft document reveals plans to weaken targets for restoring drained peatlands used in agriculture and to allow countries to avoid these targets under certain circumstances. Originally, the European Commission proposed that countries restore nature on 30% of farmed peatlands by 2030, increasing to 50% by 2040 and 70% by 2050. However, the countries want to revise these targets to 40% and 50% by 2040 and 2050, respectively. Changes to peatlands are contentious, particularly in Ireland, where they form a huge portion of the land and are used for fuel and farming. The EU law requires approval from both EU countries and the European Parliament, but it has faced resistance in Parliament, with the largest lawmaker group calling for its rejection.



Source: Reuters

[EU countries weaken nature law in hunt for deal | Reuters](#)



North America

China Accuses US and Allies of Destabilizing Indo-Pacific Following Near Collision of Warships

China's defense minister, Li Shangfu, accused the United States and its allies of destabilizing the Indo-Pacific region during a speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue security summit. This came after a near-collision incident involving warships from both countries in the Taiwan Strait. China's aggressive actions, including intercepting US aircraft, have raised concerns about the potential for a severe confrontation. The US called on China to rein in its forces' behavior and expressed support for its allies. The lack of communication and increasing incidents highlight the fragile state of relations between the two countries and the potential for further escalation in the region.

Source: CNN

<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/06/04/asia/china-defense-minister-shangri-la-speech-intl-hnk/index.html>



South America

China and Argentina Strengthen Cooperation on Belt and Road Initiative, Expanding Economic Ties

China has signed a cooperation agreement with Argentina to strengthen their joint efforts in constructing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), as announced by China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC). The agreement aims to enhance collaboration in infrastructure, energy, economy and trade, finance, and culture. This move indicates China's commitment to developing a high-quality economic relationship with Argentina, particularly in light of South America's de-dollarization efforts. The agreement based upon the existing cooperation between the two countries under the BRI, following a memorandum of understanding signed in February 2022. China has become Argentina's largest trading partner, with robust trade and economic ties between the two nations. The trade volume between China and Argentina reached \$4.647 billion in the first quarter of 2023, marking a year-on-year growth of 6.6%.



Source: Reuters

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/us-calls-un-security-council-condemn-north-korea-launch-2023-06-02/>



Asia

China and Russia Deflect U.S. Call for UN Condemnation of North Korea's Satellite Launch

China and Russia rejected a U.S. call for the United Nations Security Council to condemn North Korea's attempted satellite launch. The U.S. argued that the launch violated U.N. resolutions due to its use of ballistic missile technology. However, China and Russia placed blame on the U.S. for raising tensions on the Korean peninsula and emphasized the need for deescalation and dialogue. The Chinese representative pointed out that they did not condemn the launch and highlighted the U.S.'s joint military exercises with South Korea as a source of tension. The United Arab Emirates ambassador, chairing the Security Council, noted that while North Korea provided advance warning of the launch, it did not legitimize its illegality. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reiterated that any launch using ballistic missile technology violates Security Council resolutions. North Korea's Kim Yo Jong dismissed criticisms of the launch, citing the satellite launches conducted by other countries.

Source: Reuters

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/us-calls-un-security-council-condemn-north-korea-launch-2023-06-02/>



Australia

Australian Defence Minister Emphasizes Safe Interactions and Human Rights Concerns in Meeting with Chinese Counterpart

Richard Marles, Australian Defence Minister met with his Chinese counterpart, Gen Li Shangfu, during a regional security summit in Singapore. Marles called for "safe and professional interactions" between military planes and ships in the Indo-Pacific region and raised concerns about the ongoing detention of Australian citizens and human rights issues. The meeting is aimed at stabilizing the relationship between the two countries. Marles reaffirmed Australia's commitment to supporting peace and security in the Indo-Pacific and emphasized the importance of avoiding misunderstandings or miscalculations through formal defense dialogue. The Australian government has previously expressed concerns about China's risky intercepts of US and allied aircraft. The meeting between Marles and Li took place while Li had refused to have a formal meeting with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who called for substantive talks to avoid military crises. The Australian government also reiterated its commitment to the Treaty for the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and welcomed the resumption of defense coordination dialogue and the upcoming resumption of the defense strategic dialogue between China and Australia.



Source: The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/jun/04/richard-marles-meets-gen-li-shangfu-as-chinese-defence-minister-refuses-formal-meeting-with-us-counterpart>