

International Relations This Week: 4 Jan to 10 Jan 2023

International relations is a very important segment of the [UPSC syllabus](#). In this series, we present an analysis of the most important international issues and developments that occurred over the past week relevant for the IAS exam. In this article, you can learn more about Brazil's anti democracy riots, Legality of Israel's occupation, Elections in Myanmar, TTP attacks in Pakistan, Increased Imports of LNG by European Union.

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1. Anti Democracy Protests in Brazil

Introduction:

- On January 08, 2023, thousands of ex-President Jair Bolsonaro supporters stormed the seats of power in Brasilia and ransacked the Supreme Court, Congress and presidential offices.
 - Rioters wearing the green and yellow of the national flag colours broke windows, toppled furniture and hurled computers and printers to the ground as they ransacked the government buildings.
- Police have detained over a thousand Bolsonaro supporters after they dismantled a protest camp in the capital, Brasilia.
- The administration of Brazil's new left-wing President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who was officially sworn in on January 1, 2023, has pledged to investigate who was behind the violence and hold those responsible to account.
 - He signed an emergency decree, putting federal authorities in charge of security in Brazil's capital.

- Mr. Bolsonaro faces legal risks from several investigations before the Supreme Court in Brazil and his future in the United States, where he travelled on a visa issued only to sitting presidents, is in question.

Background:

- On October 30, 2022, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who served as the president from 2003 to 2011, beat Bolsonaro in a run-off vote.
- Following this, right-wing supporters began gathering outside military bases across Brazil, calling for military intervention to prevent the newly elected president Lula from returning to office on January 1.
- For months, people staged protests demanding the same. Many Bolsonaro supporters in Brazil were convinced that October's election was rigged.
- Bolsonaro for months has been claiming that the country's electronic voting system was vulnerable to fraud and disputed the election results.

History of democracy in Brazil:

- Brazil won its independence from Portugal through a series of military campaigns waged by the Portuguese prince, Pedro I, who founded the Empire of Brazil on 7 September 1822.
- The empire was a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament. But the empire only lasted until 1889 when a military coup established the First Republic.
- Army leaders continually interfered with the government, culminating in the coup of 1964 which established a military dictatorship.
- The army characterised the coup as an anti-communist national security operation but 21 years of dictatorship followed.
 - During this period, the National Congress was dissolved, elections were suspended, the media censored and opposition forbidden. Opponents of the regime were imprisoned and tortured or forced into exile.
- As Argentina, Peru and Uruguay all returned to democracy following military governments, the Brazilian army began the transition back to democracy. This culminated in the declaration of the Sixth Republic or 'New Republic' in 1985.
- The transition to democracy was slow, and the military played a stewardship role, dictating the terms of its leaving power.
- Since 1985, Brazil has seen the deepening of democratic practices. Direct elections to the presidency returned in 1989, and several different parties have come to power since that time.

Challenges to Democracy:

- The riots and acts of violence that took place are a direct result of the heated political climate in Brazil and the mistrust of democratic institutions by a large portion of the population.
- Millions of Brazilians appear to be convinced that the recent presidential election was rigged against Mr. Bolsonaro, despite audits and analyses by experts finding nothing of the sort.
- Bolsonaro's supporters have been repeating the claims for months, and then built on them with new conspiracy theories passed along in group chats on WhatsApp and Telegram, many focused on the idea that the electronic voting machines' software was manipulated to steal the election.
- This riot in Brasilia also drew parallels to the January 6, 2021 riot at the US Capitol, which saw a mob of Trump supporters storm the legislature in an effort to stop Congress from certifying President Joe Biden's election victory.
- U.S. President Joe Biden joined other world leaders in condemning the attacks, calling them "outrageous", while Bolsonaro who is now in Florida denied inciting his supporters and said the rioters had "crossed the line".
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed "deep concern" over the riots and asserted democratic traditions must be respected by everyone.

2. Legality of Israel's Occupation**Introduction:**

- The [United Nations General Assembly](#) passed a resolution that asked the body's highest court, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), to render its opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's prolonged occupation of Palestinian land.
- The resolution was passed with 87 member countries voting favourably, as opposed to 26 countries, including the U.S. and Israel, voting against it. India was one of the 53 countries that abstained from the vote.
- The UN resolution coincides with the return of Benjamin Netanyahu as Israel's prime minister for a sixth term, with the most far-right coalition in Israel's history taking charge of the administration.
- There are fears the new hardline regime will bring devastating effects to the Palestinians because many of Mr Netanyahu's key allies, including the most religious Zionist Party, are settled in the ultranationalist West Bank.

3. Myanmar hints at elections

Introduction:

- Myanmar's military ruler, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, announced that his regime would hold "free and fair elections".
- The general's remarks came three weeks before the 75th anniversary of Myanmar's independence from British rule and the second anniversary of a military coup in the country.
 - Myanmar declared independence on January 4, 1948, after a long fight championed by General Aung San, the father of ousted civilian leader Suu Kyi.
- The junta-imposed state of emergency is due to expire at the end of January 2023, after which the country's constitution states authorities must set in motion plans to hold fresh elections.

Background:

- Myanmar's military took over the administration hours before the opening day of parliament on February 1, 2021, after Myanmar's largest and most popular political party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), won the 2020 elections.
- The military has made unsubstantiated allegations of massive voter fraud during elections in November 2020, which were won by the National League for Democracy, as a reason for its coup.
- Recently, NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi was convicted on five more charges of alleged corruption and given a seven-year prison sentence, bringing her total prison sentence to 33 years.

Spring Revolution:

- Several new parliamentarians organised themselves into the National Unity Government (NUG) and launched what they called the "Spring Revolution" days after the 2021 coup.
- The "armed wing" of the NUG, the People's Defense Group, made up of several civilian militias, prevented the military from establishing absolute authority.
- In response to the growing protest movement, the military leaders have enacted a number of countermeasures such as internet and social media blackouts, a media blackout, the pursuit of arrests and criminal sentences against protesters, the spread of disinformation, and the violent use of force to suppress protests.
- With the situation still volatile, the NUG sees the election announcement as a ploy by the junta to sow confusion and divide the opposition. The junta has already claimed that some factions of the NLD are in talks with it.

India's Strategic interests in Myanmar and its relations with Myanmar Military:

- India shares a long land border of over 1600 km with Myanmar along with a maritime border.
- Myanmar is the only ASEAN country sharing its border with India and hence it acts as a gateway for India to South East Asia.
- Also, Myanmar plays an important role in India's [Act East Policy](#).
- India has also relied on Myanmar to quell the insurgency and separatist movements in the North Eastern States.
 - Ever since the military coup in Myanmar, there has been an increased refugee influx into Indian states through its porous borders with Myanmar.
 - The Indian government initially tried to restrict the refugee influx but had to change its policy because of the rising pressure from the citizens of North Eastern States who share age-old ties with the people of Myanmar.
- India is also the fifth-largest trading partner of Myanmar.
- The trade is dominated by the agricultural sector as India imports significant amounts of beans, pulses and timber from Myanmar.
 - India's exports include sugar and pharmaceuticals.

India's Relationship with Myanmar Military:

- India's military-diplomatic outreach to Myanmar became a cornerstone of its Act East policy.
- In order to keep China's growing influence in check, India's relationship with Myanmar has been predicated on maintaining a balance in its neighbourhood.
- As a result, it has abandoned certain democratic ideals and allowed itself to remain silent about the events in Myanmar.
- It has consistently refused to actively speak out against the junta, abstaining from voting on a UN General Assembly resolution on Myanmar.
- India recently urged Myanmar to put an end to the violence and implement the [ASEAN](#) five-point consensus. Myanmar continues to be a target for military exports.
- During his visit to Myanmar in 2022, foreign secretary Harsh Shringla discussed Delhi's security and strategic issues and "emphasised India's interest in seeing Myanmar return to democracy at the earliest; prisoners and the release of prisoners; and a complete cessation of all forms of violence". He also met with some NLD leaders who were not in prison.
- India, which recently assumed the chairmanship of the [G20](#) has presented the presidency as India's opportunity to leave a legacy of peace in the world, perhaps hoping to play a role in ending the Russia-Ukraine war. But how India deals with conflicts closer to home also remains to be seen.

4. TTP attacks in Pakistan

Introduction:

- The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which has longstanding ties with the Afghan Taliban, became active once again in Pakistan after the Afghan Taliban captured Kabul.
- The TTP has been waging a rebellion against the state of Pakistan for more than a decade. The group demands the imposition of their hardline interpretation of Islamic law, the release of its members arrested by the government, and a reversal of the merger of Pakistan's tribal areas with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.
- The return of the TTP to acts of terror, extortion and hostage-taking has severely undermined its relations with the Afghan Taliban whom the Pakistan government and Army accuse of harbouring the group.

Impact of Taliban takeover in Afghanistan:

- The TTP became active once again in the northwest tribal areas of Pakistan (earlier FATA, but now part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province) after the Afghan Taliban captured Kabul.
- Emboldened by the Taliban takeover, the TTP declared that the Taliban victory in Afghanistan will be a model to replicate in Pakistan.
- In November 2022, the TTP unilaterally ended an Afghan Taliban-brokered ceasefire agreement with the Pakistani government and ordered its fighters to carry out attacks across the country.
- They also started asserting themselves in the tribal parts of KP province, asking men not to trim their beards, and extorting money from residents of the area as a kind of "tax".
- Fears that the TTP would open Pakistan's doors to the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) are also high.
- In 2022 alone, Pakistan's monitoring agencies recorded more than 150 attacks launched by the TTP across the country, killing dozens of people.

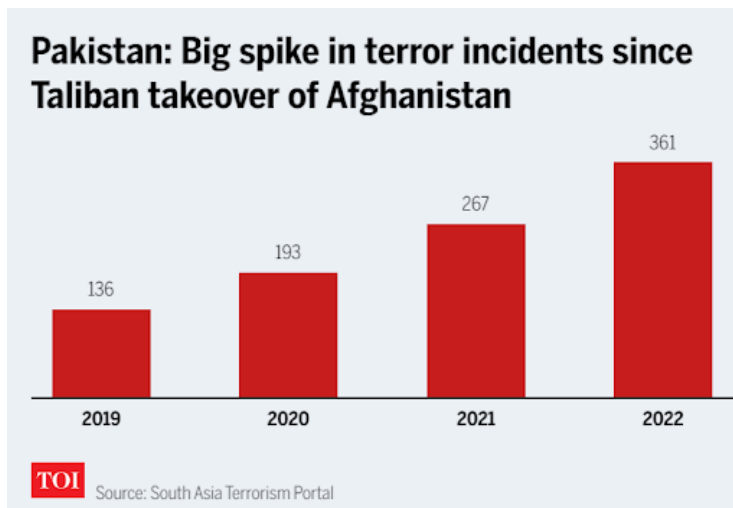


Image Source: Times of India

- 2023 is unlikely to see terrorism abating in Pakistan, as the groups responsible continue to enjoy safe havens in Afghanistan.

5. Increased LNG Imports by European Union

Introduction:

- The [European Union](#) is replacing piped Russian gas imports with rapidly increasing imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG), much of which is fracking in the US.
- By the end of the decade, additional costs for Germany's gas imports could reach up to €200bn, doubling gas bills for consumers.
- Climate activists are calling it a major setback in the effort to limit global warming. As LNG emits an estimated 10 times more than piped gas, its rapid expansion is likely to compromise climate targets.
- LNG is to compensate for shortfalls in Russian gas supplies, with four new terminals set to come online in Germany alone.
- And while LNG imports are key to the EU's REPowerEU energy plan, analysts say they won't relieve existing Russian gas shortfalls until after 2024.

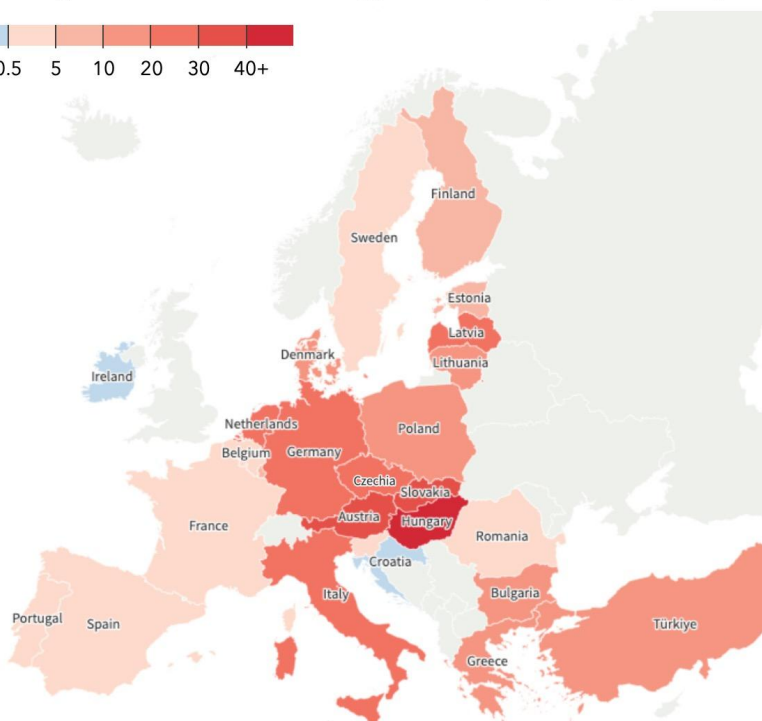
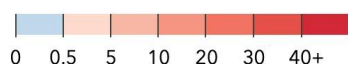
Europe's Dependence on Russia for Natural Gas:

- In 2021, the EU imported 83% of its natural gas. Russia is the biggest supplier of natural gas to Europe, which depends on the former for nearly 40% of its natural gas requirements.
- Since [Russia's invasion of Ukraine](#), gas imports from Russia to the EU have been significantly reduced.

- Russia is followed by Norway, which supplies about 22% of Europe’s gas needs; Algeria and Azerbaijan supply under 20% and 10% respectively.
- Natural gas makes up about 20% of the continent’s electric power generation.
- Germany, Europe’s largest economy, depends on Russia for 65% of its natural gas needs, while Italy gets 43% of its gas from Russia, and France, a little over 16%.

Russian gas dependence

(Russian gas as a share of total energy consumption, 2020, percent)



Source: IMF staff calculations.

IMF

Image Source: IMF

What is LNG?

- LNG is natural gas reduced to a liquid state (liquefaction) through rapid cooling to approximately $-161\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ (-259 Fahrenheit).
- This liquid gas is 600 times smaller than the original volume and is half the weight of water.
- But despite LNG's export potential, the high cost of liquefaction and production of LNG has limited its market.
- In Germany, the estimated cost of building floating LNG terminals has doubled for imports to replace Russian gas, partly due to higher operating and infrastructure costs.

- The cooling, liquefaction and transport processes as well as the post-transport resorption processes also require a lot of energy.

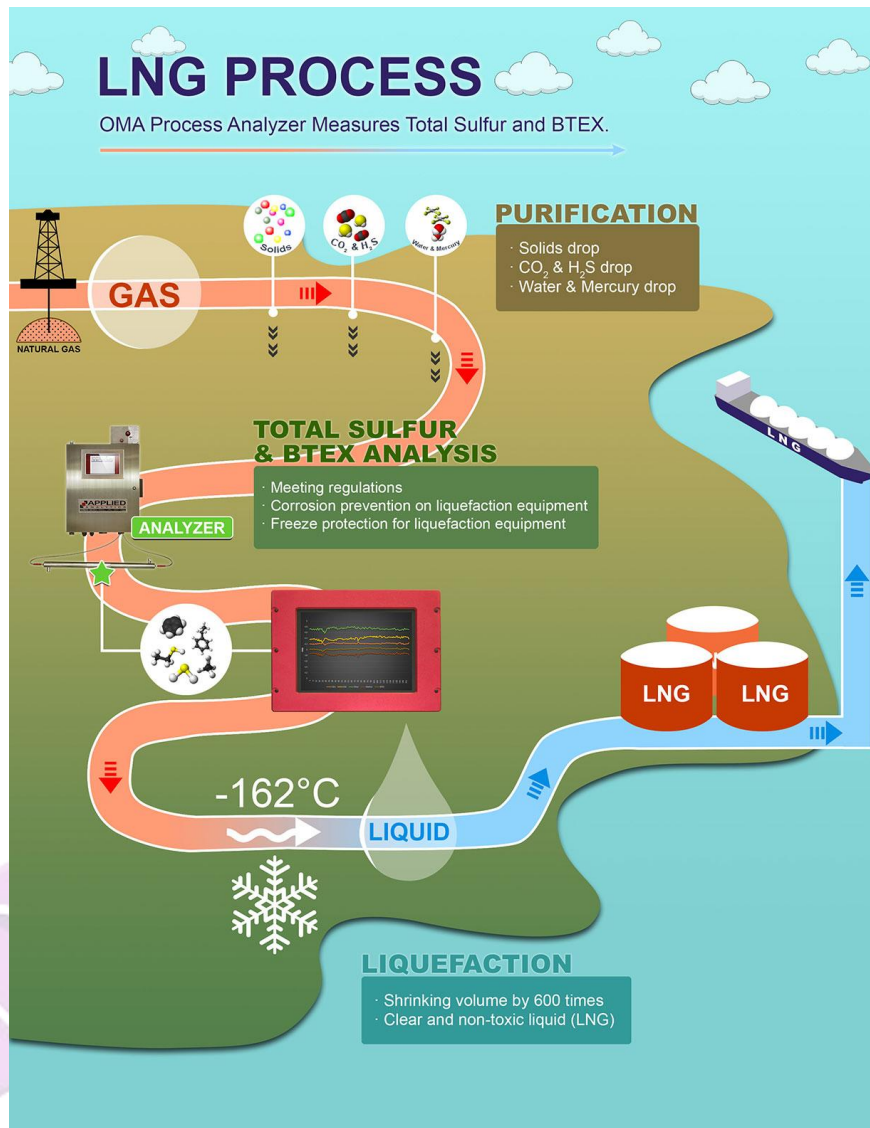


Image Source: Applied Analytics

Climate Impact of LNG:

- A lot of energy is required to extract natural gas from a reservoir, transport it from the gas field to the LNG facility for processing, chill gas to such low temperatures, and hold it at that temperature before it is warmed and regasified following a long sea or train journey.
- Methane loss across the supply chain risks also contributes to LNG's high emissions.
- LNG emits "about twice as much [greenhouse gas](#) as ordinary natural gas".
 - LNG emits 14 times as much carbon as solar power when producing the equivalent amount of energy, and 50 times as much carbon as wind power.