

# GLOBAL UP-TO-DATE

A Monthly Newsletter by Centre for Governance Studies



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## A CGS Publication

The world around us is changing rapidly. Wars, new turn in global politics, human rights issues are occurring every day, posing new challenges and concerns. Global Up-to-Date is an initiative by Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) which will work as a hub for explaining the contemporary global issues.

The regular briefs will focus and explain the issues related to International Politics, Economy, Security, Human Rights, and Development. There will be a monthly printed version newsletter containing briefs of all the contemporary global important issues. The online version contains regular updates of the pressing issues along with the PDF version of the news letter.

*Note: The views expressed in this newsletter are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policies of CGS.*



# A Nation Moves Forward after Political Stagnation in Seoul

*Roman Uddin*



After months of paralysis in Seoul's political life, the people of South Korea finally went to the polls in June 2025 to elect their new president. The election came after a period of extraordinary turbulence, triggered by the impeachment of former President Yoon Suk Yeol and the collapse of his conservative administration. For weeks the capital seemed stuck in uncertainty, with governance at a standstill and citizens growing weary of endless partisan confrontation. The June vote marked both a constitutional necessity and a public demand for stability, renewal, and direction.

The political context that led to this election was shaped by multiple failures of the preceding regime. The Yoon government faced allegations of corruption and struggled to maintain legitimacy after scandals eroded public trust. More importantly, its confrontational approach in both domestic politics and foreign relations left the country deeply polarized. Critics accused Yoon of prioritizing ideological alignments over practical governance. His sharp pivot toward Washington and Tokyo, while consistent with conservative security thinking, was seen by many as unnecessarily provocative toward Beijing, South Korea's largest trading partner. Economically, households were strained by inflation, rising housing costs, and an increasingly insecure job market. By the beginning of 2025 public patience had thinned and impeachment sealed the administration's fate.

It was within this fractured environment that the snap election was called. On June 3, citizens turned out in record numbers, with participation reaching nearly 80 percent, the highest since 1997. Two candidates carried the weight of expectation. Representing the Democratic Party, Lee Jae Myung was no newcomer to national politics. Having narrowly lost the 2022 race, he returned with greater experience, a populist edge, and a reputation for being a skilled communicator. His campaign centered on



addressing economic hardships, expanding welfare protections, and rebalancing foreign policy. His opponent from the conservative People Power Party carried forward Yoon's vision of deepening ties with the United States and Japan while taking a harder line toward North Korea and China. The ideological divide was stark. One side promised continuity in security alliances and conservative economic policies while the other called for pragmatism, social safety nets, and diplomatic balance.

Lee's victory was decisive enough to end speculation about a contested outcome. Securing nearly half the national vote, he benefited from frustration with conservative governance and from the mobilization of younger voters who demanded both fairness in the economy and less ideological rigidity abroad. The win was also facilitated by the public's desire for stability after impeachment chaos. For many, Lee's pragmatic tone felt less polarizing than the rhetoric of his opponent.

The new president immediately faced questions about foreign policy. South Korea's position is uniquely vulnerable, sandwiched between two global powers whose rivalry increasingly shapes the regional order. The United States remains the bedrock of South Korea's security. The Yoon administration invested heavily in this alliance, building unprecedented trilateral cooperation with Japan and aligning closely with Washington on strategic issues from semiconductors to defense. This orientation, however, widened tensions with China. Beijing responded critically to Seoul's participation in U.S.-led security frameworks, warning of consequences for bilateral trade. Under Yoon, relations with China were often tense and South Korean businesses dependent on Chinese markets voiced growing concern.

Lee Jae Myung's approach marks both continuity and departure. He has been careful not to weaken the U.S. alliance, describing it as indispensable to South Korea's deterrence against North Korea. He supports cooperative security exercises and values defense ties with Japan, recognizing the necessity of trilateral coordination in the face of regional threats. Yet his emphasis is on pragmatism rather than ideological alignment. Lee has already indicated that while military deterrence will continue, he will also explore channels of dialogue with Pyongyang, seeking incremental trust building that had been abandoned under Yoon.

In relation to China, Lee presents a significant shift. During the campaign he criticized his predecessor for "harassing China" in rhetoric that damaged the economy. He insists South Korea cannot afford to choose sides in the U.S.-China rivalry and must instead navigate a balanced course. This does not mean neutrality, but rather a foreign policy that prioritizes economic survival, given that China remains the country's largest export market. Shortly after his victory, Lee engaged directly with Xi Jinping, signaling willingness to reset strained ties. Such moves underline his conviction that diplomacy must secure both security alliances and economic partnerships simultaneously.

This foreign policy pragmatism has broader implications for trade and geopolitics. The global trade environment in 2025 is increasingly uncertain, marked by supply chain fragmentation and rising protectionism. In his inaugural speech, Lee warned that global trade chaos threatens South Korea's survival, a clear message that economic diplomacy will guide his administration. Already his government has pursued adjustments in trade relations with the United States, successfully negotiating relief on automotive tariffs. Similar attention is being directed toward safeguarding export channels to China



while diversifying into Southeast Asian markets to hedge against dependency. His broader vision appears to blend strategic autonomy with global engagement, ensuring that South Korea is neither cornered by great power rivalry nor left vulnerable to economic shocks.

Geopolitically, this balancing act will not be easy. Washington expects Seoul to remain a reliable partner in Indo-Pacific strategies, particularly as tensions over Taiwan remain acute. Beijing, on the other hand, demands that South Korea respect its interests and avoid becoming a mere extension of U.S. containment. Lee's foreign policy will therefore be tested by the art of maintaining credibility with both sides while avoiding the perception of compromise. Domestically, the electorate will watch whether his promises of welfare expansion and job creation can be funded without jeopardizing defense budgets or foreign investment.

The June 2025 election in South Korea was therefore more than a transfer of power. It reflected the public's rejection of political paralysis, their demand for stability, and their insistence on leadership capable of navigating both economic insecurity and geopolitical rivalry. Lee Jae Myung enters office at a time when Seoul's choices resonate far beyond its borders. His success or failure will not only shape domestic welfare but also determine how South Korea positions itself in a turbulent global order. The people's mandate is clear. They voted not simply for a party or ideology, but for a pragmatic strategy of survival in an era where both politics and trade are inseparably linked to international power struggles.



# Rhetoric and Reality of Summits to Showcase of Intentions, Failure in Action: Prospects of the 2025 G7 and NATO Summits

*Really Chakma*



The G7 Summit in Kananaskis, Canada, from June 15 to 17, and the NATO Summit in The Hague, from June 24 to 25, were two of the most important events in international politics in 2025. The two assemblies brought together important countries to deal with pressing issues in politics, economics, and security. The summits bolstered collaborative efforts among nations, established pragmatic agendas, and provided the groundwork for a more stable, prosperous, and secure global framework.

G7 Summit 2025 focused extensively on strengthening global economic stability and growth. The leaders prioritized technological innovation, energy security, and open trade regimes, also aimed to stimulate investment and sustainable growth. They also discussed a unified approach to global conflicts and peacebuilding, especially on the war in Ukraine and the Middle East tensions. The G7 showed a firm commitment to peace, security, and humanitarian assistance. By defending international law, they supported Ukraine's sovereignty and coordinated pressure on Russia through sanctions to demonstrate a united front. Likewise, calls for ceasefires and negotiated political solutions in Gaza and broader Middle East were also part of the G7's discussion. The summit broadened its agenda beyond traditional economic and security issues, reflecting adaptability to 21st-century challenges like threats from transnational repression, misinformation, migrant smuggling, and climate-induced disasters like wildfires etc. G7 expanded its cooperative framework through partnerships and collective initiatives.



On the other hand, NATO Summit 2025 also focused on collective security and defense initiative amidst evolving threats, particularly from Russian aggression and regional instabilities. NATO acknowledged the need to address cyber threats, disinformation, and transnational crime, adjusting its strategic approach to confront emerging arenas of warfare and influence. Strengthening partnerships beyond the alliance were a part of deepened cooperative initiative with partners worldwide. This broad network strengthens regional stability and fosters shared security responsibilities. While acknowledging fiscal pressures, NATO encouraged sustainable defense spending growth, balancing economic realities with security imperatives. This approach supports long-term alliance stability and burden-sharing fairness.

The G7's initiatives on supply chain diversification and innovation are expected to reduce global economic vulnerabilities, especially regarding critical minerals and technology sectors. This will foster more resilient manufacturing bases and accelerate clean energy transitions, with positive spillovers into global markets and climate goals. Again, NATO's emphasis on defense modernization and increased spending signals greater security investments, which may stimulate defense industries but also necessitate careful fiscal management to avoid economic strain. Both summits reinforce multilateralism and collective action in a geopolitical landscape marked by rising authoritarianism and great power competition. The unified stance on conflicts, sanctions, and human rights bolsters international norms and deters unilateral aggression. The G7's engagement with emerging economies and NATO's outreach to partners reflect evolving global power balances and promote inclusive governance, potentially mitigating fragmentation.

In addition to these two, hundreds of other summits and conferences are held annually; some are highlighted more, some less, but they all have the same goal of promoting "Global Peace and Prosperity" throughout all spheres of the global order. But take a look at the world! Where is the prosperity and peace? Dominance and power struggles are everywhere!

Post-colonialism is firmly ingrained throughout the world, despite not being a colonial age like previous centuries. It is standard practice to influence a nation's economics and governance in order to help or benefit other nations in the disguise of allies. Once more, people are promoting humanity while simultaneously producing and selling weapons in conflict-prone regions of the world, which will ultimately result in fatalities. For instance, there is no ceasefire or peace treaty in place in Gaza, where people are dying. The war is still going on despite the powerful nations' claims that they want it to stop. India and Pakistan are at odds over endless problems in Southeast Asia. The Rohingya crisis is one of the most talked-about issues of this moment, and Myanmar is experiencing a civil war if you look just a little way south to India. Conflicts and proxy wars that destabilize areas like Ukraine, the Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific are fueled by great power rivalry between the United States, China, and Russia. Economic penalties, competition for vital resources, and territorial disputes exacerbate tensions and impede collaboration. Furthermore, new fields like disinformation campaigns and cyberwarfare threaten international trust and democratic institutions. Because power is frequently used through conflict and coercion rather than cooperation and diplomacy, these dynamics represent a failure to build enduring peace and shared prosperity.



Another major topic of discussion at the summits is climate change and environmental preservation. The world's leaders convene annually to address issues pertaining to disaster management, the environment, and climate change. For instance, one of the largest summits is COP. Despite a number of international initiatives, global efforts to address climate change have mostly fallen short of key benchmarks in recent years. Environmental disturbances such as severe wildfires, floods, droughts, and heat waves have gotten worse. As a result of these failures, the world's food and water supplies are under stress, vulnerable people are being uprooted more frequently, and biodiversity loss has accelerated. However, the summits cost billions of dollars annually!

So, the question remains, are the summits worth the spending or they have become just “a yearly show” and a way to fool the world in the name of peace keeping and developmental initiatives? Despite international organizations like the United Nations claiming they want collective peace and prosperity, the veto power of the big 5 nations determines if a discussion will be taken by the UN or not. Surprisingly, the big 5 only approved the discussions if these did not violate their own interest. So, is there any use of summits or conferences? Alliances like NATO or G7 can take strict measures to end the disputes or crises of the world as they have the most powerful nations as members! Yet, when the question arises between self-beneficial decision or collective agreements, unfortunately most of the time self-benefit wins. Above all, isn't it a high time to think about the efficiency and effectiveness of the summits?



# Celebrating the Environment While the Planet Burns and Floods

*Kazi Nishat Aunjum*



Photo: Akhtar Soomro/Reuters

June is the month when the world proudly marks World Environment Day, a moment meant to celebrate nature, sustainability, and collective action. Yet, ironically, June 2025 unfolded as a stark reminder that speeches and slogans are poor substitutes for genuine change. While policymakers, leaders, and institutions held banners, gave speeches, and shared slogans about saving the planet, the same month saw some of the most painful demonstrations of what climate change is already doing to our world. The contradiction is striking: on June 5, the world observed Environment Day under the theme of “Beat Plastic Pollution,” but as the days of the month passed, nature itself delivered a harsher message, one that no global campaign could soften. In Nice, France, governments gathered for the UN Ocean Conference to negotiate policies for marine sustainability and ocean protection. The discussions were polished and the declarations were lofty, yet many citizens know well that such conferences often stay trapped in meeting rooms, while communities continue to suffer the real costs of environmental breakdown.

On June 5, while Environment Day events were celebrated across continents, torrential rains had already begun to signal a troubling start to the month in South Africa. By June 10, storms had escalated into one of the most destructive floods the Eastern Cape had seen in years. Entire neighborhoods in Mthatha were submerged under water levels reaching three to four meters. Homes and vehicles were swept away as people clung to rooftops waiting for rescue. More than one hundred people lost their lives and thousands were displaced. The government declared a national disaster, but citizens openly criticized decades of neglect in infrastructure planning and drainage systems that could have mitigated such tragedy. The rains themselves were linked to warmer sea surface temperatures, which carry more atmospheric moisture, intensifying downpours. The floods were not only a result of meteorology but also of poor governance and lack of preparation in a country highly vulnerable to the accelerating impacts of climate change.



Just a few days later, attention shifted to Europe where heat began to rise to dangerous levels. By June 19, the United Kingdom faced its hottest June on record for England and its second warmest for the country overall. East Anglia and the Midlands endured extreme daytime temperatures and unusually dry conditions, with rainfall falling to a fraction of normal levels. Authorities issued amber heat health alerts, warning of risks for older adults, children, and people with medical conditions. The warnings were not enough to prevent tragedy. Between June 19 and June 22, health experts estimated nearly 570 people died prematurely due to heat, with 129 fatalities in London alone. Hospitals reported spikes in emergency admissions for dehydration, heart strain, and respiratory distress. Scientists were quick to point out that climate change had made this heatwave ten times more likely and added two to three degrees Celsius to its intensity. The deaths in Britain underscored a troubling reality: even high-income countries with sophisticated health systems are unprepared for the public health emergencies that come with extreme heat.

By June 21, wildfires broke out in Croatia, sweeping through Pisak and neighboring villages. Roads were shut, civilians were injured, and an olive oil refinery was destroyed. On June 22, Greece battled flames across Chios and mainland regions, forcing mass evacuations and the declaration of emergencies. These fires spread rapidly under dry winds and high temperatures, conditions that climate science has long linked to hotter summers in the Mediterranean basin. A week later, on June 29, Turkey faced its own catastrophe as wildfires tore across İzmir Province. More than fifty thousand people were forced to evacuate, airports suspended operations, and at least three people died. The entire Mediterranean region, celebrated for its tourism and agriculture, once again revealed its growing vulnerability to recurring cycles of fire intensified by a warming atmosphere.

In Asia, the monsoon arrived early in Pakistan, beginning on June 26. By June 27, deadly flash floods swept through the Swat Valley in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Local families visiting the riverside for leisure were carried away by sudden surges, with thirty two lives lost, including sixteen children. The heavy rain was five days earlier than average and far more intense. Rapid analyses suggest that rainfall across the broader monsoon window was made ten to fifteen percent heavier by climate change. These flash floods were partly the result of atmospheric warming that allowed more moisture to accumulate before being released in violent bursts known as cloudbursts. Citizens expressed grief and anger, and four senior officials were suspended after accusations of negligence in emergency response.

As the month moved toward its close, the Scottish Highlands ignited in flames around June 28, leaving charred landscapes that were only subdued after heavy rainfall on June 30. Though no casualties were reported, the fires highlighted that northern regions, long perceived as insulated from wildfire risk, are now facing similar threats as southern Europe.

All these events were framed by global data that reinforced the exceptional nature of June 2025. According to NOAA, June registered as the third warmest globally in 176 years of records, with surface temperatures nearly one degree Celsius above the twentieth century average. The month's extremes strongly suggested that 2025 is on track to be among the five hottest years ever documented.



It is not only the numbers that should concern us but the stories behind them. Floods in South Africa and Pakistan exposed how climate change strikes hardest in places already grappling with governance and infrastructure deficits. Heat in the United Kingdom killed hundreds in a matter of days, showing that no country is immune. Fires across the Mediterranean reminded us that ecosystems are being pushed beyond thresholds once thought stable. And yet, even with these warnings, the global political response continues to lag. Conferences such as the one in Nice provide frameworks and declarations, but local communities rarely see the benefits of these negotiations. The irony of celebrating World Environment Day while burying victims of climate disasters within the same month is painful but unavoidable.

The lesson of June 2025 is that climate change is no longer a distant projection but a lived experience shaping societies today. The floods, heatwaves, and fires that unfolded across continents were not random accidents but manifestations of an altered climate system interacting with human vulnerability and policy neglect. If leaders continue to limit themselves to speeches and symbolic observances, the costs will only mount. June should therefore not be remembered only as the month of Environment Day but as a warning that the planet cannot wait for declarations. What it needs is urgent and accountable action.