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GLOBAL UP-TO-DATE

A  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 newsletter.

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Russia's 8th Presidential Election: Putin Wins for The Record 5th Term Amidst Controversy

Piyal Raiyan Choudhury



Russian President Vladimir Putin has secured his 5th presidential term in the three-day-long 8th Presidential election, which was held on 15-17 March, spreading controversies due to the lack of credible opposition. The 'new' elected president won an overwhelming majority, with a resounding 87.85% of the vote on a voter turnout of 77.5%, which is an all-time record, surpassing the 2018 turnout rate of 67.5%, as reported by the Central Election Commission (CEC). The result means that Putin extended his rule for six more years until 2030 and will overtake his fellow compatriot Joseph Stalin to become Russia's longest-serving elected leader before his term ends.

In Russia, the presidential election used to be held every four years, which was extended to six years in 2008 by constitutional amendment. Later, in 2020, another constitutional amendment removed presidential term limits, allowing Putin to retain his presidency until 2036.

The 8th presidential election is widely criticised and regarded as illegitimate, in light of a few specific factors. The continuance of Putin was predetermined, as it was quite evident that there was no real competition. All of the credible opponents and critics were either jailed, exiled, or dead, which made Putin's victory much anticipated.

Three primary registered candidates stood against Putin in the presidential election. While it was a landslide victory for the incumbent president, with a record number of votes, his closest opponent Nikolay Kharitonov from the Communist Party came second with merely 3.86%. New People candidate Vladislav Davankov came third with 3.76%, and Leonid Slutskiy from the Liberal Democratic Party came fourth with 2.97%, according to the first estimates of the presidential election result at the Central Electoral Commission (CEC).

Critics from the West speculated whether Putin is a legitimate leader of Russia, given the absence of any true opposition and the laughable margin of victory. The three quasi-opponents who stood against Putin have a history of supporting him and Russia in the full-scale war against Ukraine, which he launched in 2022. Therefore, they didn't truly oppose the Russian leader or put up much of a fight in the campaign as expected.

The campaign received criticism as anti-war candidates were disqualified or barred from running. The real opposition was annihilated by years of despotism. Alexei Navalny, aged 47, one of Vladimir Putin's real political foes, was barred from running on the grounds of a prior criminal conviction, suspiciously died weeks before the election in a highly secured Arctic penal colony, a death seen as politically motivated by international observers worldwide.

Widely speculated by Navalny's family and supporters that he was murdered in prison by the Kremlin, an accusation which the Kremlin has outright rejected. The allies of Navalny are either jailed or exiled from Russia. Yulia Navalnaya, the widow of Alexei Navalny, wrote her late husband's name on the ballot at the Russian embassy in Berlin while casting her vote. She urged Navalny's allies to participate in the "Noon Against Putin" initiative, inspired by the late prominent Russian opposition leader in his last political statement. The initiative was meant to be a peaceful protest by people who did not support Putin, encouraging them to come to the polling stations at noon and vote against him.

Boris Nadezhdin, 60, another anti-war activist who wanted to run for the presidential election, was disqualified by the Central Election Commission (CEC) in February. Yekaterina Duntsova, 40, who also had the inclination to run for the campaign and was vocal against the war with Ukraine, was disqualified by the commission in December.

The election witnessed acts of defiance from Putin's opponents both inside and outside Russia. As stated by Josep Borrell, the EU Foreign Chief, the election wasn't "free and fair." Russia held voting in the occupied territories of Ukraine, as the Kremlin considers the residents Russian citizens and voters. The harshest criticism came from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy: "There is not a single bit of legitimacy in this simulation of an election, and there can't be. This act should be on trial in The Hague." Germany also didn't hold back; Christina Hoffmann, Chancellor Olaf Scholz's spokeswoman, referred to the Russian regime as a "dictatorship" and "authoritarian".

Amidst all these criticisms and controversies, Russia's relations with China, India, Iran, and North Korea have deepened, and their leaders have also congratulated Putin on his victory through press briefings or statements. Countries with historic ties to Russia, such as Azerbaijan and Belarus, also appeared to be joyful about the victory of President Vladimir Putin.

What's next? The Russian President has won a resounding mandate, firmly giving him the confidence to stick with his current path, far from the philosophy of the West. How the prolongation of Putin's rule will affect geopolitics is a question to be answered in the coming years. Unless the West finds a way to reconcile with Russia, the world may be in for a rough few years.

Delhi Liquor Policy: Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Got Arrested

Aong Cha Ching Marma

An unprecedented event took place in Indian political history involving the arrest of the sitting Chief Minister of Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal on 21 March 2024. Enforcement Directorate summoned Delhi's Chief Minister in total nine times before eventually raiding the chief minister's residence and taking him into custody. His arrest is linked to the Delhi liquor policy scandal. Aam Aadmi Party leader sought protection from Delhi High Court before getting arrested by the Enforcement Directorate. However, the High Court denied his request for relief from coercive action. He will remain in custody before appearing in front of the court on 28 March.

Arvind Kejriwal and his companions formed the Aam Aadmi Party on November 26, 2012. He and his party AAP's advent in India's politics links back to the Anti-corruption Movement in 2011. Anna Hazare, a prominent social activist led the movement proposing a new policy against corruption named Jana Lokpal Bill. The movement was the result of the mistrust of Delhi's people to their then government. Several events shattered the trust of people starting from the horrific Mumbai Attack in 2008 and the unfolding of several major scams such as the ISRO scam in 2010, the Adarsh Housing Society scam, the Tatra Defense Scam in 2011, and eventually the Commonwealth Games scam.



Arvind Kejriwal was part of the major movement against corruption. Despite this, he shared differing beliefs from Anna Hazare who was not interested in getting into politics. After founding the political party AAP, he surprisingly was able to pull off a landslide victory against Sheila Dikshit in Delhi's state assembly election in 2013. From then on, he and his party have run the government for over 10 years.

The recent affairs regarding the arrest of Arvind Kejriwal stem from the introduction of a new excise policy back in November 2021 aiming at the modernization of liquor sales and honing more revenue for the government. A Group of Ministers led by then Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and Health Minister Satyendra Kumar Jain constituted an expert committee to set the foundation of the new excise policy. The bill gave private corporations store operation licenses in place of the government's previous ownership of liquor outlets. Additionally, it suggested raising the yearly license price from Rs. 8 lakhs to Rs. 75 lakhs. Under the new excise policy, the areas of Delhi were categorized into 32 zones, each allotted to a maximum of 27 vendors. A few months after the policy's adoption, several complaints surfaced, one of which was sent to the Delhi Police in June 2022 by Chaudhary Anil Kumar, the former president of the Delhi Congress, and claimed that the policy contained a "multi-crore scam". The issue at hand garnered a great deal of attention and was met with a range of controversial statements from different sources. These statements have highlighted a significant loophole in the current excise policy. Lieutenant Governor (L-G) Vinai Kumar Saxena received a report from Delhi's Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar stating the violations in the policy provided the CBI probe recommended by him. The report concluded "financial losses to the exchequer" for over Rs 580 crore.

In another investigation, the Enforcement Directorate alleged Jain and Sisodia for overruling the decision of experts and bypassing the Lieutenant Governor in implementing the policy. The ED also alleged Vijay Nair, AAP's communication head for getting illegally paid amounting to Rs. 100 crores by a "South Group", consisting of Hyderabad-based private entities. Due to those accusations, Manish Sisodia and three other people were the targets of raids by the CBI. In its FIR, the CBI listed Sisodia and fourteen other accused parties, including Vijay Nair, who was taken into custody in September 2022. K Kavitha, a leader of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), was also detained on March 15, 2024, for reportedly giving significant sums of money to prominent AAP figures to gain benefits from the new Delhi excise policy.

The Aam Aadmi Party, which translates to the "Common Man's Party," was formed following a significant anti-corruption movement, offering hope to the general populace. However, the unfolding events surrounding the Delhi Liquor Policy scandal, coupled with the arrest of leaders from the same party, appear to dampen the optimism initially sparked by Arvind Kejriwal and the AAP.

Moreover, there is concern regarding Kejriwal's arrest just before India's national election, with many speculating a political connection. The United States has already expressed apprehension over this matter. Nevertheless, Kejriwal remains resolute in his determination to govern Delhi, even while in custody. Despite this, the future of Arvind Kejriwal and the AAP remains uncertain until the pending hearings provide clarity.

Javier Milei's Economic Approach to Argentina

Ishrat Jahan Shithi



The new president of Argentina, Javier Milei, has a far-right policy platform. In his little time in office, he has already sent Congress a number of reform proposals that will fundamentally change the composition of the Argentine state. Since going into politics, Milei has concentrated on advancing libertarian ideas, including dollarizing the Argentine economy, reducing the size of the government, and dismantling the Central Bank.

In terms of economics, Milei respects the policies of former president Carlos Menem and is influenced by the Austrian School. As he sees socialism as the embodiment of force and jealousy, he is in favor of capitalism. Since taking office, Milei, an economist by background, has referred to himself as a libertarian and an "anarcho-capitalist." Milei, who has criticized past administrations for their excessive spending, suggests cutting back on government ministries and tackling economic issues through fiscal reforms and spending reductions. He has referred to former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher as "a great leader" and lauded her economic ideas.

His main economic idea for Argentina is to replace the peso, the native currency, with the US dollar. He has stated time and time again that stopping politicians from printing money is the only way to put an end to the evil of inflation, which has reached over 140%. He intends to shut down the Central Bank as a result. Milei has called the Central Bank of Argentina "one of the greatest thieves in the history of mankind". He stated that "four types of central banks exist: the really awful ones, such as the Federal Reserve; the extremely bad ones found in Latin America; the tragically horrible ones; and the Central Bank of Argentina. In order to give people, the freedom to select their own monetary systems, he supports the Central Bank's ultimate dissolution. In addition, he supports a dollarized economy as a way to combat the nation's ongoing inflation issues. Milei said, in reference to the 1990s Convertibility Plan, that Argentina had the lowest inflation rate in the nation by January 1993.

The fact that Argentina has a long-term foreign-currency sovereign rating of "CC" indicates that there is a greater likelihood of a restructuring or other type of default event occurring in the upcoming years. Preventing this situation probably requires a significant increase in international reserves, which will be challenging given their low beginning position and difficulties in the adjustment process. Regaining market access is also probably going to be necessary, and that might be more difficult. Since foreign-currency bond payments will begin to pause in 2025, there is not much time left to meet these requirements. Due to strict balance of payments regulations, fluctuating currency rates, and a sizable primary budget deficit supported by central bank credit, the country's economy has been cut off from global financial markets for more than four years. Argentina also plans to cut back on subsidies related to energy and transit.

As the new libertarian president of Argentina, Javier Milei has prescribed economic "shock therapy" economic strategy, a drastic and probably painful plan to stabilize the economy of the South American nation facing its worst crisis in decades. This strategy reflects his beliefs in fiscal restraint and free markets, as well as his acute awareness of the limited time he has to enact the policies required to stabilize and transform the nation. The plan called for massive cuts to public spending as well as a more than 50% depreciation of the peso. Given the limitations he confronts, his approach appears to provide the best chance of success despite being fraught with political and economic hazards.

Javier Milei's free-market economic policies—which include tax cuts, privatization, and deregulation—may push Argentina closer to a market economy by encouraging investment and employment growth, but they also raise questions about social inequality and the reduction of welfare programs. If Javier Milei's economic plans are put into practice with the required adjustments, they might help Argentina's economy revive. Nonetheless, their efficacy hinges on their suitability for Argentina's distinct conditions, tackling systemic problems, and cultivating agreement among interested parties for enduring recuperation initiatives.