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About Global Up-to-Date

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The initiative provides regular analytical briefs on pressing international developments, focusing on international politics, economy, security, human rights, development, and environment. In addition to regular online updates, CGS Global Up-to-Date publishes a monthly edition that brings together selected briefs on important contemporary global issues.

Contents

01 Starmer's Exit and Britain's Test of Strategic Continuity
Roman Uddin

02 FIFA 2026: Football, Geopolitics and the Global South
Kazi Nishat Aunjum

03 The Strategic Folly of India's Border Politics
Md. Saiful Islam Shanto

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Starmer's Exit and Britain's Test of Strategic Continuity



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Abstract: *Britain's repeated leadership changes have deepened political uncertainty and weakened strategic consistency at a time of major domestic and global challenges. The instability has affected public trust, economic confidence, and the country's ability to project a clear foreign policy direction. The experience highlights the costs of political volatility for long-term governance and international influence.*

Keir Starmer's decision to step down as Labour Party leader and prime minister, less than two years after winning a commanding parliamentary majority, is more than another dramatic episode in Westminster. It raises a question whether a country remain strategically reliable when its political leadership changes repeatedly. Britain is preparing for its seventh prime minister in a decade, a striking rate of turnover for a political system once associated with continuity. The issue is not that Britain has become ungovernable. Its institutions remain strong. The concern is whether frequent changes at the top gradually weaken the clarity, consistency and credibility expected of a major diplomatic, financial and security power.

Starmer's departure was driven by domestic politics. Labour's heavy losses across England, Scotland and Wales intensified doubts about whether he remained the party's strongest electoral asset. The reversal mattered because his 2024 victory had looked overwhelming in Parliament but was less secure beneath the surface. Labour won 411 seats with 33.7 percent of the vote. That produced a powerful governing majority, but also showed how Britain's electoral system can convert a relatively narrow vote share into commanding parliamentary authority. Once public confidence weakened, the size of the majority could not insulate the prime minister from pressure inside his party.

The deeper problem was the gap between expectation and visible delivery. Labour had promised progress on living costs, public services, housing and growth. Yet the economic picture remained mixed. GDP fell by 0.1 percent in April even though the economy grew over the wider three-month period, while CPI inflation stood at 2.8 percent in May. These were not catastrophic numbers, but politics rarely turns on statistics alone. Voters experience the economy through rent, tax, wages, public services and household security. When a

government arrives with a large majority and a language of national renewal, modest improvement can quickly feel like underperformance.

Starmer's fall therefore belongs to a longer pattern rather than a uniquely Labour failure. David Cameron left after the Brexit referendum. Theresa May could not secure parliamentary agreement for her withdrawal deal. Boris Johnson was forced out after scandals and ministerial revolt. Liz Truss lasted only weeks after her economic programme destabilised financial markets.

"Labour's heavy losses across England, Scotland and Wales intensified doubts about whether Keir Starmer remained the party's strongest electoral asset."

Rishi Sunak then lost the 2024 election. Changing the governing party did not end the cycle. Britain's leadership churn is being produced by structural pressures as much as by individual mistakes.

One reason is constitutional. Britain's parliamentary system allows a governing party to replace its leader without automatically holding a general election. Citizens elect MPs, not the prime minister directly, and a new leader can take office if he or she can command the confidence of the House of Commons. This flexibility is a strength because it allows a political crisis to be contained without becoming a national constitutional emergency. But it also makes leadership replacement an attractive escape route. When a prime minister becomes unpopular, parties can conclude that changing the person is easier than solving the conditions that made the person unpopular.

A second force is fragmentation. Labour and the Conservatives no longer operate in a political environment dominated by two parties with predictable voting blocs. Reform UK, the Liberal Democrats, the Greens and nationalist parties compete for different parts of an increasingly divided electorate. First-past-the-post can still produce a large majority, but that majority may exaggerate the depth of public support. Governments can therefore look institutionally secure while remaining politically vulnerable. That tension helps explain why parliamentary strength does not necessarily produce leadership security.

The third force is the personalisation of government. Prime ministers are increasingly treated as the owners of every policy failure, polling decline and political setback. Twenty-four-hour media, social platforms and permanent campaigning compress the time available for governments to show results. Structural problems such as weak productivity, housing shortages, NHS pressure or irregular migration cannot be solved at the speed of a news cycle. Yet parties are judged at that speed. Replacing a leader can create the appearance of action even when the underlying constraints remain unchanged.

This matters internationally because Britain is not an ordinary middle-ranking state. It is a nuclear power, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, a central NATO member and an important supporter of European security and Ukraine. Allies need to know that commitments made in London will outlast the politician who announces them. The period after Starmer's announcement is revealing. He continued high-level diplomacy, met NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte and presented a Defence Investment Plan intended to give allies and industry greater clarity about Britain's long-term direction.

That continuity is Britain's strongest defence against political instability. The civil service, armed forces, diplomatic network, Parliament and treaty obligations do not disappear when a prime minister does. Core foreign-policy commitments also extend beyond one leader. NATO membership, the nuclear

deterrent and support for European security are embedded more deeply than the personality occupying Downing Street. Britain's state therefore remains more stable than its recent list of prime ministers suggests.

Still, repeated turnover carries a cost. Diplomacy depends partly on institutions, but also on trust between people. Foreign leaders, ambassadors, investors and negotiators build relationships with ministers and advisers. Each transition forces some of those relationships to be rebuilt. Negotiations can slow, priorities may be reviewed and initiatives associated closely with one prime minister can lose momentum. Adversaries may watch transitions for hesitation. The damage is rarely a dramatic policy reversal. It is more often an accumulating discount on Britain's ability to promise that a strategy will survive long enough to be delivered.

This is why the next leadership change should be judged by more than whether it improves Labour's polling. A new prime minister may communicate better, restore political energy and rebuild public consent for difficult reforms. But another change of personality without a durable governing strategy would deepen the problem the transition is meant to solve.

Starmer's decision to leave is therefore best understood as a test of strategic continuity. Britain has constitutional mechanisms capable of managing leadership change smoothly, and its international commitments remain stronger than any single premiership. The harder task is domestic. Closing the gap between ambitious foreign-policy promises and the economic and political capacity required to sustain them. If the next prime minister can connect security, growth and public consent, this transition may prove corrective rather than destabilising. If leadership replacement becomes a substitute for long-term policy, Britain will remain influential, but its influence will increasingly come with a credibility discount.

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FIFA 2026: Football, Geopolitics and the Global South



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Abstract: *The FIFA 2026 World Cup extends beyond football, reflecting the growing intersection of sports, geopolitics, and global influence. The tournament provides countries, particularly in the Global South, with a platform for diplomacy, identity-building, and international visibility while highlighting inequalities in global sporting power structures.*

The FIFA World Cup is often described as a celebration of football. But in 2026, it has become much more than a tournament. Hosted jointly by the United States, Canada and Mexico, the World Cup is taking place amid war, migration disputes, sanctions, visa restrictions and rising nationalism. The stadium may be a place of sport, but the road to the stadium has become a place of diplomacy.

This year's tournament is the largest World Cup ever staged. Forty-eight teams are participating, with matches across sixteen cities in three countries. On the surface, this looks like a victory for globalization. More countries have access and more national identities are visible on the world stage. But beneath this expansion lies a more complicated story. The 2026 World Cup shows that football does not escape geopolitics. It carries geopolitics with it.

One important feature is the presence of countries whose histories are deeply shaped by colonialism. Former colonial powers such as England, France, Spain and Portugal are playing alongside countries once colonized or politically dominated by European empires. Ghana, Senegal, Morocco, South Africa, Mexico and DR Congo are not simply football nations here. They also represent histories of conquest, resistance and post-colonial identity.

This does not mean every match is a replay of colonial history. Football should not be reduced to the past. But the past often returns through symbols. France against Senegal carried the memory of French colonial rule in West Africa. England against Ghana echoed the British Empire and the Gold Coast's struggle for independence. Spain against Uruguay recalled Spanish rule in Latin America. Such matches can become stages where dignity, memory and identity are expressed.

The opening match between Mexico and South Africa had symbolic value too. Mexico carries the legacy of Spanish colonial rule and struggles over sovereignty, while South Africa carries the memory

of colonialism, apartheid and liberation. Their meeting helped frame FIFA 2026 as an event where the Global South is not merely participating, but shaping the narrative.

The host countries add another political layer. The United States, Canada and Mexico are neighbors and partners, but tensions remain. Border control, migration, tariffs and security have shaped relations among them. A tournament advertised as a North American partnership is also a test of political cooperation under global scrutiny.

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Beyond post-colonial symbolism, FIFA 2026 is also a platform for Global South diplomacy. For many countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the World Cup is a rare moment of global visibility. These states often face unequal representation in international political and economic forums, but football allows them to appear before a global audience on more equal emotional ground. Their flags, fans, anthems and players become instruments of public diplomacy.

The expanded format has strengthened this dimension. More countries outside the traditional European and South American football powers can project identity and confidence. For countries such as Ghana, Senegal, Morocco, South Africa, DR Congo, Japan and Cape Verde, participation is also about claiming space in a global order where power is usually measured by military strength, economic size or diplomatic influence.

This is where Global South diplomacy differs from traditional great-power diplomacy. The message is not always delivered through formal summits or official statements. It is expressed through national pride, diaspora mobilization, fan culture, media attention and symbolic victories. A win against a former colonial power or a strong performance against a major football nation can become a diplomatic signal. These countries are not passive subjects of the international system; they are active producers of global culture and identity.

The case of DR Congo is particularly important. Its return to the World Cup after more than five decades, and its progress to the knockout stage, carries meaning beyond football. A country often discussed internationally through conflict, minerals, humanitarian crisis and instability can also be seen through pride, resilience and achievement. Such moments do not erase domestic challenges, but they widen how the country is represented globally. This is image diplomacy in a very visible form.

Yet this diplomacy remains shaped by inequality. Teams and supporters from weaker-passport countries often face greater visa difficulties, travel costs and border scrutiny than fans from wealthier states. The tournament therefore both empowers and limits the Global South. It gives visibility, but not always equal mobility. It offers symbolic equality on the pitch, while political inequality remains at airports, embassies and borders. It also exposed FIFA's limits. FIFA can promote universal participation, but host governments still control visas, borders, security screening and access.

The same contradiction appears in soft power. The United States wants to show organizational strength and global openness, Mexico wants to highlight football culture and regional importance, and Canada seeks to project multiculturalism and stability. Former colonies, meanwhile, use the tournament to show that they are not peripheral to the global game. But if fans are excluded by visa barriers or teams feel politically disadvantaged, the message of unity becomes weaker.

FIFA 2026 matters geopolitically because it brings together old and new world orders. The old order appears in former empires and colonial memory. The new order appears in the rise of Global South teams, migration politics, regional rivalries and the commercial power of global sport. Football cannot solve wars, repair colonial history or normalize hostile relations. But it can create moments where political enemies must communicate, former colonies confront former empires on equal terms, and global inequality becomes visible to a mass audience.

The World Cup is powerful because it is emotional. People watch for goals, but also for identity, memory and belonging. In 2026, those emotions are attached to difficult political questions: who can travel, who is welcomed, who is excluded, who controls borders, and whose history is recognized. FIFA 2026 should therefore be understood as a geopolitical event as much as a sporting festival. Its matches are played on grass, but its meaning is shaped by borders, empires, wars and diplomacy. The ball may move freely across the pitch, but the people following it still live in a world divided by power.

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The Strategic Folly of India's Border Politics



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Abstract. *India's border politics reflects the complex challenges of balancing security concerns, regional influence, and relations with neighbouring countries. The article examines how border strategies, shaped by historical disputes and geopolitical ambitions, can create unintended consequences for India's strategic interests and regional stability.*

The escalating expulsions of Bengali-speaking minorities across the India-Bangladesh border have transformed a chronic migration dispute into an acute humanitarian and diplomatic emergency. Driven by domestic electoral politics, India's shift from legal deportation to extrajudicial "push-ins" threatens to unravel bilateral relations just as critical resource treaties approach expiration. To prevent a future regional crisis, both nations must immediately replace unilateral force with transparent, institutionalized verification protocols.

From the shores of the Mediterranean to the banks of the Rio Grande, international borders are increasingly being weaponized as sites of political theater and humanitarian exclusion. Yet one of the world's most volatile and legally dubious border crises is currently unfolding largely outside the global spotlight. Along the 4,096.7-kilometer boundary separating India and Bangladesh, a pattern of extrajudicial expulsions—described by New Delhi as "push-backs" but more accurately called "push-ins" by Dhaka—is tearing families apart and destabilizing one of South Asia's most important bilateral relationships. In mid-2026, this friction is no longer a routine border-management dispute. It is a crisis of due process, driven by the dangerous intersection of ethno-nationalist politics, militarized enforcement and weak bilateral verification.

"From the shores of the Mediterranean to the banks of the Rio Grande, international borders are increasingly being weaponized as sites of political theater and humanitarian exclusion."

The immediate catalyst is not a sudden, unprecedented wave of cross-border migration. It is a shift in India's internal political and administrative machinery. For decades, both governments have formally accepted that verified foreign nationals should be returned through established channels. Recent developments, however, suggest a move away from court-supervised deportation toward unilateral administrative expulsion. India's Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 consolidated central authority over the entry, exit, registration and regulation of foreigners. In practice, this has coincided with a more aggressive political environment in border states. According to BGB headquarters records cited by The Daily Star, at least 2,303 people were pushed into Bangladesh between May 7, 2025, and January 26, 2026. The same report said the group included 126 Indian nationals and 38 Myanmar nationals, showing how imprecise and dangerous such operations can become.

This erosion of due process disproportionately affects specific ethnic and religious communities. In India, the narrative of "illegal infiltration" has often been weaponized against Bengali-speaking Muslims, who are treated as suspects because of language, religion, class, and geography. The problem is not limited to one state. When Assam completed its Supreme Court-monitored National Register of Citizens in 2019, official NRC data showed that more than 1.9 million people were excluded. The result did not fit the simple political narrative that "foreigners" could be identified through religious identity alone. Many of those affected came from a range of communities, including Bengali Hindus, Bengali Muslims, Assamese Hindus, Gorkhas and others whose lives did not fit neat nationalist categories.

The political rhetoric, however, has remained blunt. In West Bengal, the BJP's "Detect, Delete, Deport" slogan has turned citizenship and migration into electoral theater. Human Rights Watch reported in June 2026 that Indian authorities were forcibly expelling ethnic Bengali residents, mostly Muslims from West Bengal, to Bangladesh without basic due process. The report also cited West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari as saying that his government had detained hundreds of "Bangladeshi infiltrators" and forced nearly 5,000 people "to go back." In Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has openly defended the practice of taking people near the border and pushing them across. Such statements blur the line between state policy and political spectacle.

The human toll is stark. Families are being turned into stateless pawns trapped in a heavily militarized zero line. In early June 2026, HRW reported that Bangladeshi border guards had foiled 21 attempts by the BSF to push more than 200 people, including children, into Bangladesh since June 1. Bangladeshi reporting later said the number of foiled attempts had risen further. In Panchagarh, witnesses described a 75-hour standoff after the BSF

allegedly tried to push 10 people, including children, into Bangladesh. The group was reportedly stranded through rain and lightning while repeated flag meetings failed to resolve the crisis.

The violence accompanying the border crisis is equally alarming. According to Ain o Salish Kendra figures reported by Dhaka Tribune, 34 Bangladeshis were killed by the BSF in 2025, with 24 killed by shooting and 10 allegedly dying after physical torture. The same reporting said border violence remained a persistent pattern over the previous decade. On June 12, 2026, shortly after the 57th BGB-BSF director-general conference in New Delhi concluded with pledges of peace and stability, a Bangladeshi youth, Mujib Ali, was shot dead along the Moulvibazar border, according to BGB. Indian-linked reports framed the incident as a confrontation involving alleged smugglers. Even if such claims are contested, the timing exposed the widening gap between diplomatic language and border reality.

India's current approach is not only a human rights concern. It is also a strategic miscalculation. The economic premise behind the "mass infiltration" narrative is increasingly outdated. Bangladesh is no longer the impoverished country imagined in older political discourse. In 2024, World Bank data put Bangladesh's nominal GDP per capita at about $2,593, broadly comparable with India's level. Cross-border movement, where it occurs, is shaped not only by poverty but also by labour demand in India's construction, agriculture, domestic work and informal sectors. Indian employers benefit from vulnerable migrant labour, while politicians later denounce the same workers as an existential security threat.

The policy also weakens India's moral standing abroad. New Delhi rightly demands consular access, fair procedures and humane treatment when Indian citizens are detained or deported overseas. But when people alleged to be Indian citizens are stripped of documents, transported to the border and forced into Bangladesh before nationality is properly tested, India undermines the very principles it invokes for its own diaspora. A country that seeks greater global leadership cannot afford to normalize legal shortcuts at its own frontier.

For Bangladesh, the push-in crisis compounds an already enormous humanitarian burden. Dhaka hosts more than one million Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, according to UNHCR, most of them denied citizenship in Myanmar and dependent on international assistance. Bangladesh therefore understands how opaque verification processes can generate long-term statelessness. It has legitimate reasons to refuse unilateral expulsions. At the same time, if some individuals are verified Bangladeshi nationals, Dhaka should accept them through formal repatriation procedures. The key is verification, not coercion.

The diplomatic fallout could spill into much larger issues. The 1996 Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, signed for 30 years, is due to expire in December 2026. Renewal talks are already difficult because of dry-season flow concerns, climate stress and competing water needs. A relationship defined by border standoffs, shootings and the abandonment of vulnerable families in no-man's land creates a toxic environment for water diplomacy. Trust is the currency of bilateral negotiation, and at the zero line that currency is being depleted.

To avert a deeper regional crisis, both governments must act quickly. India should suspend unilateral push-ins and return to legally established consular verification. Bangladesh should cooperate in time-bound identity checks where evidence supports nationality claims. Both sides should create a joint verification mechanism using existing identity databases, including India's Aadhaar

infrastructure and Bangladesh's national ID system, while ensuring that no person is expelled without written notice, legal representation and a right to appeal. Children, pregnant women, elderly people and asylum seekers should never be stranded between two armed border forces. Where citizenship or protection status is genuinely contested, neutral technical support from UNHCR or the International Organization for Migration could help make the process credible.

The families shivering under monsoon rains at the zero line are not abstract statistics or convenient political talking points. They are human beings caught between two neighbors that have previously resolved complex territorial and maritime disputes through patient diplomacy. True regional leadership requires more than fences, slogans, and force. It requires the discipline to enforce law through procedure. Until India and Bangladesh replace unilateral expulsion with institutional verification, the border will remain a bleeding wound in South Asia's political geography.

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