

THE WORLD IN BRIEF

JULY EDITION



The Symposium Times



THE WORLD IN BRIEF



NEW

EDITION 3

JULY 2025

SYMPORIUM

NOTE FROM THE EDITORS:

DEAR READERS,

WELCOME TO THE THIRD EDITION OF THE WORLD IN BRIEF, THE SYMPOSIUM CLUB'S PUBLIC POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS NEWSLETTER. THIS EDITION SPANS CONTINENTS, IDEOLOGIES, AND CENTURIES UNDERSCORING BOTH HISTORY'S ECHOES AND TODAY'S UNFOLDING DRAMA. FROM THE POLITICAL FALLOUT OF SOUTH ASIA'S NUCLEAR STANDOFF TO THE AI-POWERED REPRESSION IN MYANMAR, WE LOOK AT THE MOMENTS THAT ARE SHAPING OUR WORLD. OUR READERS WILL START IN NEW MEXICO'S FLAMING DESERTS, WHERE OPPENHEIMER'S DILEMMA KICKED OFF THE ATOMIC AGE AND WHERE PROMETHEAN AMBITION MET McCARTHYITE FEAR. WE THEN MOVE TO THE RETURN OF LATIN AMERICA'S "PINK TIDE," AND ARGENTINA'S SHOCK ELECTION OF JAVIER MILEI POPULIST OR REFORMER? WE EXAMINE THE MEANING OF STARMER'S INAUGURAL YEAR IN POWER IN THE UK, IF THERE HAD BEEN MORE THAN SLOGANS. BRICS, ON THE OTHER HAND, STANDS AT THE CROSSROADS OF HISTORY: IS IT A BALANCING FORCE AGAINST WESTERN DOMINANCE OR AN ALLIANCE STILL STRUGGLING WITH INTERNAL CRACKS? THIS EDITION OF THE WORLD IN BRIEF TAKES THE PULSE OF AN EVOLVING WORLD AND LET THE FOLLOWING PAGES BE YOUR GUIDE.

UNTIL AUGUST,

AADITYA AGARWAL AND ANSH BHANSALI,
EDITORS-IN-CHIEF,
THE WORLD IN BRIEF

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COP31 - AUSTRALIA'S PROMISE

Reyansh Aggarwal

To the Honourable Prime Minister, Federal Ministers, Members of Parliament, and citizens of Australia,

Next year, the world will come together in Australia for COP31. This is not just another global event; it is a chance to do what is right for the planet. You have pledged to stand with your Pacific neighbours, whose homes are already at risk from rising seas. That promise comes with a clear responsibility that COP31 must deliver real and reliable funding for them.



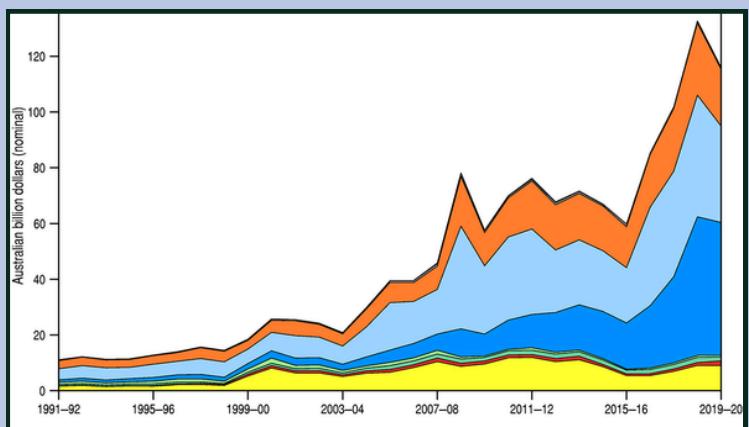
Loss and damage due to climate change in the Pacific are not a future threat. They are a devastating reality that serves as a reminder to the rest of the world. It has already taken away lives, cultures, and ecosystems across the region. We can see it in the Torres Strait, where seawalls are crumbling, and ancestral graves are getting washed away. In Tuvalu and Kiribati, saltwater from the sea is mixing with fresh water and poisoning crops. Even for Australia, it is not a distant problem; New South Wales and Queensland are still rebuilding from devastating floods.

Your country has long benefited from carbon exports, and that creates a responsibility to act. However, it also gives you the credibility and initiative to lead. If a major fossil fuel supplier leads the call for fair compensation and a fast transition, it sends a message the world cannot ignore. Hosting COP31 is your chance to turn words into action.

I propose that you take three steps to show real leadership and ensure COP31 delivers a meaningful impact against climate change.

First, pledge a substantial contribution to the new loss and damage fund before the conference begins. This early action will push other nations to step up. Also, this fund should have a clear payment schedule for the years ahead, which gives confidence to the affected and vulnerable nations and communities that the support is here to stay.

Second, empower the affected nations to govern the fund. This will involve creating a board that has equal representation from funding nations and affected nations, to ensure that those who are living the reality of climate change have an equal say in decisions being made. This board can be supported by an independent panel of experts who will serve as advisors.



Finally, commit a share of fossil fuel export revenues to fund projects that protect Australians from the impacts of climate change. This includes investing in early warning systems and infrastructure to predict, detect, and contain bushfires, supporting sustainable land management practices, making decarbonization of the transport sector faster, and improving energy efficiency. As an island nation likely to face some of the earliest and most severe effects, you must protect yourself and set an example for others to follow.



All this may seem expensive, but doing nothing will cost more, in repairs after disasters and in what we lose forever. If Australia does the right thing, it would not just be seen as the host of COP31, but as a true partner in building a safer future.

With respect and hope,
Reyansh Aggarwal.



NUKES IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Yatee Jaiswal

"The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking."

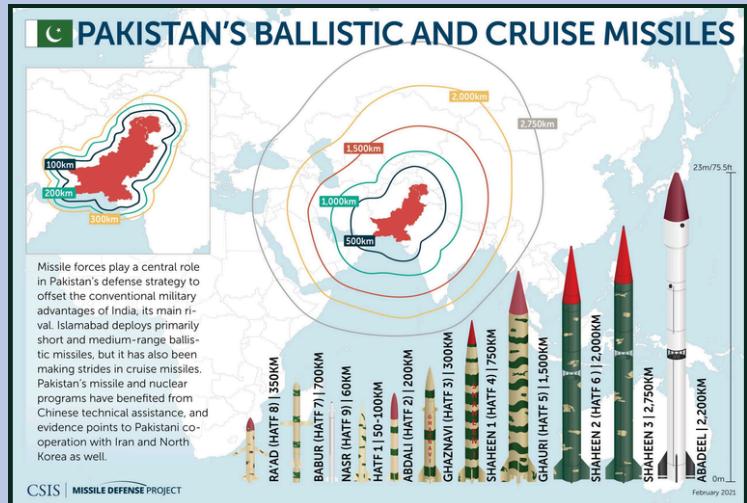
-Albert Einstein

To mistake Pakistan's bomb for yesterday's crisis is to misread today's map. In South Asia's most recent flare-up, India's Operation Sindoar (April-May) strikes and Pakistan's military ripostes, causing the old nuclear shadow to stretch in different directions. Islamabad's leaders voiced a warning, officials hinted at a "full spectrum" reply, and experts reviewed escalation ladders. Yet Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has since moved to cool the air, insisting Pakistan never prepared a nuclear move and that its arsenal remains for defence, not aggression.



Pakistan's declared strategy has evolved from Minimum Credible Deterrence to Full Spectrum Deterrence, a wider ladder of nuclear options meant to cover every possible angle at which India might try limited war. Retired Lt. Gen Khalid Ahmed Kidwai, who has served as the custodian of Pakistani nuclear planning for a long time, describes this doctrine as a plan involving all three military branches with weapons for strategic and tactical use, ranging from very short distances to approximately 2,750 kilometres, leaving no part of India out of reach.

The most controversial part of this spectrum is the Nasr short-range system, Pakistan's response to India's Cold Start doctrine. It is designed to allow small nuclear strikes on invading forces, making even a limited attack extremely costly. Pakistani strategists argue these battlefield nukes restore deterrence by denying India any safe "space below the nuclear threshold." Critics counter that compressing decision time around forward-deployed nuclear units raises the risk of miscalculation or unauthorised use.



Unlike India's stated (if debated) No First Use pledge, Pakistan pointedly retains the option to use nuclear weapons first if it judges its survival at stake. Officials have repeated this stance publicly; the military has never embraced NFU, citing India's larger conventional forces and doubts about New Delhi's credibility. This first-use flexibility underpins Islamabad's crisis messaging.



During the Sindoor confrontation, Pakistani voices warning of a "full spectrum" response sought to deter deeper Indian strikes. Both sides have grown more and more willing to test old red lines such as air strikes and missile shots, which raises concerns that repeated risky moves could weaken the stability nuclear weapons are meant to ensure.



A recent US intelligence assessment says Pakistan is modernising its nuclear arsenal to offset India's edge, even as militant violence strains its resources. Chinese defence support helps sustain these upgrades. However, at the same time, Islamabad highlights nuclear security and peaceful uses: command-and-control investments, training centres, and long-term cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency on energy and health. Sharif underscored this partnership in February 2025 meetings with IAEA leadership. Such outreach aims to reassure the world that Pakistan's bomb is guarded—and that atoms can light homes as well as deter war.

Pakistan's nuclear policy in 2025 marries wide-rung deterrence, first-use ambiguity, and public restraint. The arsenal's purpose, Islamabad insists, is to prevent wars, not fight them.

The danger lies where confidence meets crisis.

CODE OVER COUNTRY

THE RISE OF MYANMAR'S AI TYRANNY

RHEA AGRAWAL

Recently, Myanmar has witnessed an immensely concerning change: a military junta backed by digital tools. These tools enable the junta to suppress civilians' dissent and disagreement, invalidating their freedom of speech, while also increasing surveillance and falsifying public opinion with bots. The central source of this issue is one main cause- AI. Is AI truly an accomplice in authoritarian rule and has it finally begun to take over the world?

On 1 February 2021, the Myanmar military overthrew the democratically elected government, disregarding a decade of progress. Under this regime, violence against civilians has escalated with thousands jailed, tortured, and killed. This regime has built a 'near-total surveillance state,' said the UN.



The AI-led surveillance activities in Myanmar are numerous: data retention, SIM registration, VPN blocks, and facial recognition. Human Rights Myanmar calls for urgent international action to expose, sanction, and end the military's deliberate strategy of digital repression and exclusion. Myanmar's junta utilises personal data that can single out marginalised communities, violating trust in their people by depriving them of their rightful privacy.



Beyond digital repression, legal abuse has become an everyday routine for Myanmarese citizens, with security agencies employing 'predictive policy algorithms.' These policies analyze historical data to predict who is the most likely to pose a political risk or protest. This raises extremely frightening concerns for civilians and, the UN as citizens could be arrested not for what they've done, but for what the algorithm suspects they might attempt. These systems strip people of their fundamental rights.



What's most disturbing is that other countries are beginning to weaponize digital tools. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are leading exponents of digital authoritarianism in the Middle East. The UN also condemns all forms of digital repression and authoritarianism: "The international community must not stand quietly by while the people of Myanmar are systematically denied their fundamental rights to freedom of expression, access to information, and privacy, which are guaranteed by international human rights law," said the experts at UNHRC.

This rise of digital authoritarianism in Myanmar is not just a national crisis, but a wake up call for the whole world. When technology is weaponised and given power, instead of being controlled by humans, it controls them. To prevent this, we must act urgently. Tech companies must be held accountable for how their inventions are used, and international bodies must establish firm rights about AI use, restricting and banning it from being placed above the people who not only programmed but also created it.

Most importantly, individuals must be able to protect their right to stay informed about activities occurring in their home country and peacefully advocate for their beliefs without fear holding them back from making a difference, a change.

ONE YEAR OF STARMER

Aashi Bubna

Two world wars, the rise and fall of the British Empire and intense party rivalries have shaped a turbulent political history for the United Kingdom, and with the financial crisis, Brexit and four prime ministers in five years, the 21st century has been particularly turbulent, setting an anxious stage for the 2024 General Elections. A Labour victory was certain, after fourteen long years of Conservative suffering, but what was unexpected was the sheer scale of the victory. Sir Keir Starmer won with a landslide of 411 out of 650 seats, the largest majority since Tony Blair in 1997. But one year on, the results have been mixed.



Starmer inherited an economy in stagnation, with lingering disputes in key sectors and a public desperate for stability. His early moves were bold, settling major strikes by offering public sector pay rises that ended years of deadlock. He introduced a higher minimum wage and groundbreaking workers' rights legislation, signalling a decisive break from the austerity of the past. "Working people deserve dignity," Starmer declared to Parliament. On health, he promised £30 billion in extra National Health Service funding by 2028, with reforms to redirect resources to frontline services.



Internationally, Starmer rebuilt Britain's standing, personally brokering three trade deals and playing an active, visible role on Ukraine. His rapport with US President Donald Trump, dubbed the "Trump whisperer" by commentators, helped restore transatlantic ties strained by Brexit. The government also committed to raising defense spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2027.

Yet, for all these early achievements, Starmer's administration quickly ran into turbulence. A sharp national insurance tax rise and the end of winter fuel payments for nearly ten million pensioners described by the Treasury as "necessary medicine", sparked a backlash. Polls plummeted, with support for Labour dropping to 23%, behind Nigel Farage's Reform UK at 28%, attracting the infamous title of "the shortest honeymoon in Downing Street history."

As Starmer marks his first anniversary, the verdict is complex. He has restored calm in the public sector, boosted workers' rights, and re-established Britain's international voice. But he has also alienated traditional supporters with harsh fiscal decisions, struggled to control law and order, and seen public confidence wane alarmingly. The road ahead is steep and the world is watching. *What will Starmer do next?*

THE BIRTH OF THE ATOMIC AGE

Dr Openheimer

Yohaan Mathur

“Prometheus stole fire from the gods and gave it to man. For this, he was chained to a rock and tortured for eternity.”

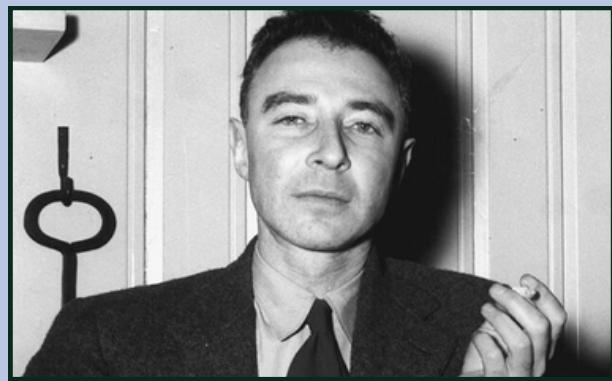
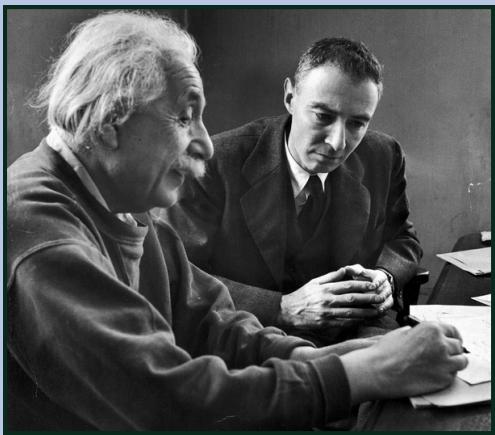
J Robert Oppenheimer was Prometheus in a lab coat. The man who split the atom for mankind and was later ostracised for it. Here's his story:



The Manhattan Project was never solely a scientific undertaking. It was the most clandestine operation in human history that shaped the future to come. Initiated in 1942 included 130,000 individuals cost more than \$25 billion in today's value. Its goal was to create the first nuclear weapon ahead of Nazi Germany. The outcome was the explosion of “Little Boy” above Hiroshima, and “Fat Man” above Nagasaki killing over 200,000.

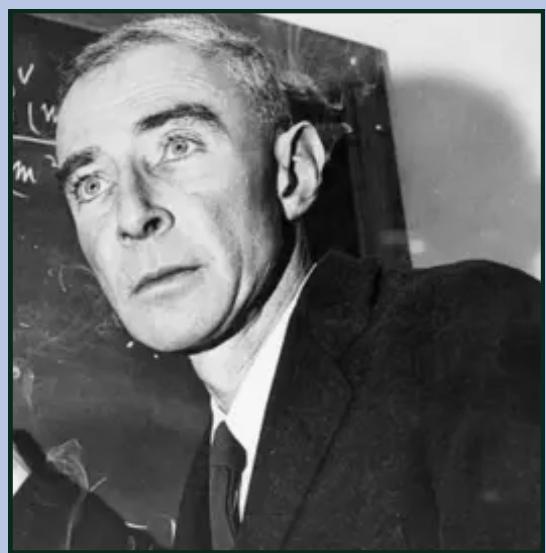
An atomic bomb when detonated creates mass destruction sourced by atomic fission power. This is the power created when 1 atom splits into 2. “Nuclear Chain Reaction” was a theory that if an atomic bomb is detonated, fission will occur and then these fissional atoms will cause a self-sustaining chain reaction that will spread at supersonic speed across the troposphere and stratosphere. Temperatures surge to millions of degrees Celsius, Oceans begin to flash-boil, and the sky becomes a shell of plasma. This was a dilemma that it stumped the world's greatest minds including Einstein himself. Unleash a weapon to stop fascism, or gamble with the fate of the Earth itself?

At 5:29 a.m. on July 16, 1945, the desert lit up with the fire. The Trinity Test wasn't just the detonation of the world's first atomic bomb it was the detonation of morality. In that moment, Oppenheimer realized he had given mankind the power to destroy itself, without any promise it would choose not to. The test succeeded and with it, the world changed. Only 4 days after the Trinity Test the men in suits and ties arrived to ship Oppenheimer's creation to the Tinian Island. Oppenheimer famously says, "We've built it. But we don't get to decide how it's used." This reflects the contrast between power to the state versus the creator.



In Christopher Nolan's Oppenheimer, his inner conflict reaches its expression in the iconic scene: Oppenheimer stands in front of a cheering crowd, but all he hears is silence. Faces melt into ash. Applause becomes death. Then, quietly he speaks the iconic line:

President Truman presented Japan with an ultimatum, surrender without conditions or encounter "immediate and complete annihilation." Japan didn't reply, the bombs were dropped and on 15th August Japan capitulated.. The Manhattan Project achieved success. It had also provided a mirror and the reflection was permanent.



It was not a line of pride it was a confession. That decision fell to the unelected bureaucrats far removed from the lab men who saw numbers, targets, timelines. But Oppenheimer saw something else a future shaped not by science, but by its consequences and its regrets.

Oppenheimer wasn't celebrated for his work; he was punished for it. After the war, as Cold War paranoia and McCarthyism spread through the U.S., Oppenheimer's earlier political ties made him a convenient target. In 1954, he was put through a rigged security hearing. They accused him of being a communist sympathizer. His clearance was revoked, and he was painted as a traitor to the country which he had served for more than a decade.

THE RETURN OF THE PINK TIDE

4 Questions on the State of Latin America

Nayantara Choksi

What is the Pink Tide?

The Pink Tide is also known as 'turn to the left'. It is a political wave that turned towards left-wing governments in Latin America during the 21st century. The term 'pink' was used because it wasn't as extreme as communism (which is called 'red'), but still leaned to the left.

These governments were also referred to as 'left of centre' and 'radical social democratic'. They are also members of the Sao Paulo Forum, which is a conference of left-wing political parties and other organisations from the Americas. The countries that were viewed as part of the ideological trend were known as pink tide nations. The movement was also called socialism of the 21st century.

Why did the Pink Tide Fade?

When the leftist governments were elected into power, they promised to help the poor and reduce inequality. At first, most citizens were excited by free healthcare, better education and government support but over time, some of the pink tide governments became involved in major corruption scandals. In some of the pink tide nations like Venezuela, the economy got worse, inflation increased and people struggled to buy basic necessities like food and medicines. After this, voters started choosing right wing leaders (also known as Blue Tide). These 'blue tide' leaders promised to fix the economy and restore order and by the late 2010s, the pink tide seemed to be over.

Is the Pink Tide Coming Back?

Surprisingly, in the past few years, the Pink Tide looks like it is coming back. Many Latin American countries have elected left wing leaders again. In Brazil, Lula de Silva was re-elected, in Colombia, Gustavo Petro became their first leftist president and Gabriel Boric was elected in Chile. Mexico and Honduras have also now elected left leaning leaders. After the pandemic, poverty and inequality has become worse in these countries, so people are now hoping for change. Citizens are demanding better healthcare systems, education and support for the less fortunate and the left wing leaders have promised this. This sudden change of government has left people wondering whether Latin America is entering the Pink Tide for the second time.

How is it Different from the First Time?

Although the new wave of leaders in Latin America is also left wing, the second wave of the Pink Tide is not exactly the same as the first one. The current leaders are younger and are more modern with their ideologies. They are also more open to working with other countries and different political views. For example, Gabriel Boric, from Chile, strongly supports human rights and sometimes even criticises other leftist governments. This time, the leaders are expected to fix the problems without making the same mistakes from the past governments like overspending and ignoring corruption. Also, because of social media, the citizens are more informed and are likely to hold the leader accountable for their actions and/or mistakes.