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| |  | | --- | | Each week, some of our Councillors and interns share a selection of articles, analytical pieces, videos and podcasts about what is happening in the world of international affairs. This week, they consider Alexei Navalny's death, threats of mandatory conscription in Myanmar and an innovative Royal Society of NSW event.  Disclaimer: The views expressed below by councillors and interns are their own. The Australian Institute of International Affairs New South Wales does not take policy positions. | |

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| |  | | --- | | [A group of people standing in a crowd  Description automatically generated](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alexey_Navalny_in_2020.jpg) | | [**Contemporary Hero: Alexei Navalny**](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/16/russian-activist-and-putin-critic-alexei-navalny-dies-in-prison)  A good holiday should provide respite from current affairs and news, but sometimes an event is so cataclysmic that it shatters the vacation bubble. This February, the report of the death of Russian dissident Alexei Navalny broke the calm of New Zealand’s countryside like the rumble of an earthquake. Navalny, called by [***The Guardian***](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/16/russian-activist-and-putin-critic-alexei-navalny-dies-in-prison) “Putin’s most significant political challenger”, died in prison on 16 February. His death highlighted the seemingly unrestrainable power of Vladimir Putin. It can only be interpreted as a warning from Moscow of the fate of any who dare to set themselves up against the regime, in Ukraine or elsewhere.  Coming home to Sydney, I reminded myself of Navalny’s courageous opposition to autocracy by watching the 2022 documentary Navalny, freely available on [***SBS On Demand***](https://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/watch/2120026691681). It is available there for the next few weeks. Do not miss it!  Image credit: **[Michał Siergiejevicz](https://www.flickr.com/photos/siergiejevicz/" \t "_blank)** | |

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| |  | | --- | | This article was selected by Jocelyn Chey AM. Jocelyn is an Adjunct Professor at the Australia-China Relations Institute, University of Technology Sydney, Visiting Professor at the University of Sydney and an Adjunct Professor at the Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture at Western Sydney University. She was previously a senior officer in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Jocelyn is a Fellow of Australian Institute of International Affairs. | |

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| |  | | --- | | A group of soldiers holding guns  Description automatically generated | | [**Hiding Out Against Conscription in Myanmar**](https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/feb/28/we-will-turn-the-gun-on-the-military-hiding-out-against-conscription-in-myanmar)   Anonymously [**speaking**](https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/feb/28/we-will-turn-the-gun-on-the-military-hiding-out-against-conscription-in-myanmar) to Aung Naing Soe and Rebecca Ratcliffe for The Guardian, this interview with a garment worker in Myanmar provides a personal insight into the fear of the military that has gripped Myanma people. Two-thirds of the country are in conflict, and the military continues to fight anti-coup groups of rebels. The garment worker discusses in detail the emotional response of his friends and family, who, under threat of mandatory conscription laws, fear kidnapping and forced enrolment. This mandatory conscription he describes as the military’s ‘last, final bullet’, using people as human shields against anti-coup groups. He discusses the movement way from cities, as people aim to return to their home villages to keep their families close together. He describes the difficulties of joining resistance groups, who would be unable to find him a job or help him feed his young family. Further, he stresses the impossibility of leaving due to the extreme expense to get a passport. The emotional cost of this ongoing conflict is felt throughout the interview, providing insight into the living conditions of those under military rule.   Image credit: [**Paul Vrieze**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ethnic_armed_organisations_in_Myanmar#/media/File:Kachin_Independence_Army_cadets_in_Laiza_(Paul_Vrieze-VOA).jpg) | |

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| |  | | --- | | This article was selected by Isabel Freudenstein. Isabel is chair of the Australian Red Cross Rising Women Leaders and graduated from a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Advanced Studies at the University of Sydney with First Class Honours in International Relations. Her thesis examined the changing nature of humanitarian intervention in a multipolar international system. Isabel is currently studying a Juris Doctor at the University of Sydney and working as a paralegal. | |

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| |  | | --- | | In addition to our Councillors' recommendations, we invited our interns to share with you what they have found insightful or interesting in the world of international affairs over this week. This week, Isabella Crowe considers Brazil's foreign policy choices since Lula's reelection and Paris Fleury investigates the rising social restrictions placed on Pakistani citizens.  Disclaimer: The views expressed below by councillors and interns are their own. The Australian Institute of International Affairs New South Wales does not take policy positions. | |

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| |  | | --- | | [**A year on from re-election: Lula as a 'diplomatic broker'**](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/brazil/what-happened-lula)  In January 2023, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was re-elected as President of Brazil after twelve years out of office. A year later, Matias Spektor [**argues**](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/brazil/what-happened-lula) in Foreign Affairs that Lula’s foreign policy decisions have not aligned with his previously stated goals and electoral promises. Spektor outlines Lula’s intentions to assert Brazil as a leader in Latin America, facilitate international cooperation and act as a bridge between Western countries and Brazil’s South American neighbours, concluding that his diplomatic choices have not produced these outcomes. His perspectives on Ukrainian President Zelensky and comments about 'instability' related to NATO have alienated the USA, who single-handedly blocked the UN Security Council resolution for a ceasefire in Gaza that was led by Brazil in October.   In order to better assert his vision of Brazilian foreign policy, Lula must focus on ties with the USA ahead of their presidential election and the G20 summit to be hosted by Brazil in November. Spektor argues that a greater emphasis on the mutual interests of green transition and food security would benefit Lula's diplomatic approach towards the USA and neighbouring South American countries. Brazil's role as a host of the upcoming G20 summit and COP30 conference will provide Lula with an 'international stage' to assert himself as a diplomatic intermediary.   Image credit: [**The White House**](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:President_Biden_with_President_Lula_da_Silva_2023.jpg) | |

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| |  | | --- | | This article was selected by Isabella Crowe. Isabella is an International Relations student currently completing her Honours at the University of New South Wales. She is writing her thesis about memory politics in Australia and its influence on foreign policy. | |

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| |  | | --- | | A group of people holding signs  Description automatically generated | | [**Pakistan's Internet Dilemma**](https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/pakistan-pulls-data-plug)  In the wake of the February 2024 Pakistani General Election, the nation faces increasing global criticisms for violations of freedom of speech. Since the election, the coalition government of the Pakistan Muslim League and the Pakistan People’s Party have prohibited the use of the social media platform X, formally known as Twitter. Broader internet services, including specific VPNs, have also been downgraded. Thus, Pakistani citizens find it increasingly difficult to interact online quickly and efficiently.  In an article for The Interpreter, Pakistani-based journalist and researcher Adnan Aamir[**investigates**](https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/pakistan-pulls-data-plug) the root causes of the nation’s online censorship and its implications. The prohibition of social media platforms began following the no-confidence motion that caused the dismissal of former Prime Minister Imran Khan. After Khan’s removal and arrest, his political party, Pakistan Tehreek i Insaf (PTI), was banned from holding physical political gatherings. As a result, the PTI’s meetings became virtual. The article highlights this movement to virtual rallies as the initial cause of the government’s tightening control over social media. Following this successful manoeuvre in reducing political competition, the government widened internet control to reduce general dissent. The article demonstrates how the country’s banning of social media platforms foreshadows a ‘bleak future’ --- one in which the freedom of Pakistani citizens will continue to be eroded unless effective opposition is mounted against the moves.  Image credit: **[Alisdare Hickson](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_protester_holds_up_a_placard_near_London%27s_Trafalgar_Square_calling_for_a_democratic_Pakistan.jpg" \o "User:Alisdare" \t "_blank)** | |

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| |  | | --- | | This article was selected by Paris Fleury. Paris is in her final semester of her undergraduate degree studying Politics and International Relations at the University of Sydney. During her studies, she completed a semester abroad at Sciences Po University in Reims, France. Paris is also a member of the Peace and Security Team for the United Nations Association of Australia NSW Division. | |

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| |  | | --- | | **Get involved!**  We're committed to keeping conversations about international affairs going, so get involved in our Letters to the Editor section!  Each week, we publish letters from our subscribers about what they think of the issues we’re discussing.  You can take part in the conversation by emailing us with your comments on each edition's articles. There are just a few simple guidelines: letters should be no more than 100 words in length, and should only be about the previous edition's articles. Please include your name and affiliation, and a mobile number (which won't be published). If you are a university student, please include your university and current degree.  Send all letters to the editors at [**aiianswletters@gmail.com**](mailto:aiianswletters@gmail.com) by Wednesday at 5pm Sydney time for the chance to be published in the following fortnight's newsletter. | |

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