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This week, they delve into the rise of political 'nepo-babies', Ukraine's military incursion into Russia, the phenomenon of the securitisation of everything and AUKUS. *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.* | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | [**‘Political nepo babies’: The global rise and consequences**](https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2024/08/08/-political-nepo-babies---the-global-rise-and-consequences-.html)  The term ‘nepo baby’—frequently levelled against the Lily Rose-Depps and Alexander Skarsgårds of the world—has taken up residence in political analysis. Recent research from Dr James Loxton, a senior lecturer in Comparative Politics at the University of Sydney’s School of Social and Political Sciences, [**suggests**](https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2024/08/08/-political-nepo-babies---the-global-rise-and-consequences-.html) that hereditary democracy is a pervasive global phenomenon, overpowering the hereditary autocracies that are the target of more fervent public criticism. The study analysed democratically elected heads of government who were children, spouses or siblings of former heads of government in countries with sustained democratic periods between 1945 and 2010. The results are hardly surprising: the practice of hereditary democracy limits meaningful political representation, disappoints voters and nourishes mediocrity, seriously undermining democratic processes. Intriguingly, though, it has enabled the rise of female leaders in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Indonesia—a goal that remains elusive for many Western democracies. Passing the job to progeny or partner is hardly a new phenomenon. But it warrants greater scrutiny in a year where more people than ever in history will be heading to the polls, seeking to make their vote count.  Image credit: [**Pete Souza**](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:State_Visit_of_Canadian_Prime_Minister_Justin_Trudeau_03.jpg#/media/File:State_Visit_of_Canadian_Prime_Minister_Justin_Trudeau_03.jpg) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | *This article was selected by Imogen Biggins. Imogen recently graduated from the University of Sydney with First Class Honours in a Bachelor of Arts/Advanced Studies (International and Global Studies), for which she received the University Medal.* | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | [**Nobody Really Wins**](http://responsiblestatecraft.org/ukraine-kursk-incursion/?utm_source=substack)  Ukraine’s military incursion into the Russian border area of Kursk has been widely reported as a public relations boost for Ukraine and a morale blow to Russia. But in the Quincy Institute (Washington) publication [***Responsible Statecraft***](https://responsiblestatecraft.org/ukraine-kursk-incursion/?utm_source=substack), Seymour Hersch and other analysts pour cold water on this enthusiasm. They argue that it has caused relatively few Russian casualties because Ukraine’s army effectively overran undefended territory. Russia quickly brought massive airpower to bear against the advancing Ukrainian troops, who lost many soldiers and a huge proportion of their equipment. This may reduce pressure on Ukraine's defence of its own territory as Russia moves forces from eastern Ukraine to stop the Kursk incursion, but Ukraine risks shortfalls in manpower and equipment needed elsewhere: top-notch combat units from the front lines in eastern Ukraine were moved to the Kursk strike force, tilting the balance in Russia’s favour. The *Washington Post* of [**19 August**](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/ukraine-russia/) reports that Russian troops are now advancing in Donestk.   Ukraine’s seizure of Russian territory and capture of Russian troops could hand Ukraine a bargaining chip in future negotiations with Russia, if the Ukrainian troops succeed in holding their position. But Ukraine’s incursion into Kursk is inconsistent with the principle of territorial integrity which is at the core of Ukraine’s case and that of its supporters against the Russian invasion. The *Washington Post* reported on [**17 August**](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/08/17/kursk-ukraine-russia-energy-ceasefire/?utm_campaign=wp_post_most&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&wpisrc=nl_most&carta-url=https%3A%2F%2Fs2.washingtonpost.com%2Fcar-ln-tr%2F3ebdaa6%2F66c0c2a513573876a75) that Ukraine and Russia were due to send delegations to Doha to negotiate a halt to strikes on energy and power infrastructure by both sides, with the Qataris serving as mediators meeting separately with the Ukrainian and Russian delegations. This would have pointed to a partial cease-fire and offered a reprieve for both countries. But these talks have been derailed by Ukraine’s incursion into Russia. For now, escalation seems to be prevailing over negotiation.  Image credit: [**Russian Military**](https://www.rawpixel.com/image/3319480) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | *This article was selected by Ian Lincoln, President of AIIA NSW since 2017. Ian was in the Department of Foreign Affairs for 33 years including postings in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Pacific. He was later an appellate member of the Refugee Review Tribunal and has worked in a number of community organisations.* | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | [**China, nationalism and securitisation**](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10357718.2024.2337884)  “The deterioration of Australia-China relations: what went wrong?” is the title of an article by Katherine Lee and Elad Bruhl in the latest edition of the [***Australian Journal of International Affairs***](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10357718.2024.2337884). It offers a valuable take on the well-rehearsed problems of the bilateral relationship, putting it in the context of the rise of nationalist, sovereignty-oriented movements in the US and Europe. This wider lens focus helps to explain much of the rhetoric in Canberra and Beijing.  Similarly, Daniel Drezner writes in [***Foreign Affairs***](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/how-everything-became-national-security-drezner) on “How everything became national security: and national security became everything”. This tracks the evolution of American preoccupation with “national security” since the end of the Cold War and makes the point that if everything is an emergency then nothing is a priority.  Both these articles underline the importance of defence and security decisions currently being implemented and the need for them to be publicly debated.  Image credit: [**Flickr**](https://www.flickr.com/photos/imd1/2442276151/in/photostream/) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | *These articles were 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 the Australian Institute of International Affairs.* | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | [**Full steam ahead for AUKUS cooperation**](https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/aukus-revamped-australia-to-indemnify-us-and-uk-against-any-liability-from-nuclear-risks/rudp9zf10)  This week, Australian media was once again engrossed in fierce discussion of the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) partnership on nuclear-powered, conventionally armed submarines. Casual observers could be forgiven for interpreting the latest Naval Nuclear Propulsion agreement [**tabled**](https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/aukus-revamped-australia-to-indemnify-us-and-uk-against-any-liability-from-nuclear-risks/rudp9zf10) before Parliament as containing sudden, jarring realisations, rather than unsurprising legal action required under US and UK law.     Australian commentators have dissected this latest development from every angle.  Non-legally binding ‘related political commitments’ in the treaty action have been [**queried.**](https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3274188/australia-blasted-new-aukus-deal-over-nuclear-waste-fears-blow-sovereignty) [**Commentators**](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-12/revamped-aukus-document-reveals-how-us-and-uk-can-walk-away/104214398) seem caught between worrying about the likelihood of the US abandoning AUKUS on one hand and fearing that the US is backing Australia into a corner on the other.     The terms of this enabling agreement are in fact welcome to our officials. Within, our partners have pledged to make every effort to transfer the knowledge and items needed at the highest quality and safety standards. Australians should be reassured that it reiterates Australia’s abiding commitment to nuclear non-proliferation. This agreement will underwrite AUKUS progress long into the future.    Still, the public debate around this latest piece of the AUKUS puzzle reinforces that one of the greatest challenges facing our officials is earning the trust and support of the Australian public for this most complex of projects.  Image credit: [**Wikimedia Commons**](https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AUKUS_-_U._S._Secretary_of_Defense_Lloyd_Austin_with_Richard_Marles_MP,_Deputy_Prime_Minister_and_Minister_of_Defence,_Australia,_and_Grant_Shapps,_Secretary_of_State_for_Defense,_United_Kingdom_at_Moffett_Field,_California_on_December_1,_2023.jpg) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | *This subject was selected by Alice Nason. Alice is a research associate with the Foreign Policy and Defence Program at the United States Studies Centre.* | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **From the Interns** | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | In addition to our Councillors' recommendations, we invite our interns to share with you what they have found insightful or interesting in the world of international affairs over this week. This week Matthew McKelvie analyses China's growing presence in Antarctica, while Ethan Pooley shares a report that unpacks the strategic thinking in Beijing.  *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.* | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | [**Presence is Power**](https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/china-is-serious-about-antarctica-australia-should-be-too/)  While the world's collective gaze is anchored to tensions in Eurasia, China's manoeuvres in Antarctica have slipped beneath Canberra's radar. In February 2024, China established its [**fifth Antarctic base**](https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/china-has-fifth-station-antarctica), its third within the Australian Antarctic Territory. This territory, covering 42 per cent of the continent, is supposedly safeguarded by the Antarctic Treaty System. However, recent [**failures to reach a consensus**](https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/china-is-serious-about-antarctica-australia-should-be-too/) among treaty signatories raise doubts about the treaty's effectiveness and the legitimacy of territorial claims.  Canberra takes the historical stability of the treaty system for granted and with it, a naïve view of international law in contemporary politics. But as Buchanan rightly notes, "[**International law is about interpretation**](https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/china-is-serious-about-antarctica-australia-should-be-too/)". For now, Beijing maintains that its Antarctic activity is focused on expanding its [**krill industry**](https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2024/04/what-are-chinas-long-term-antarctic-ambitions.html) and deploying super trawlers. But the dual-use nature of China's infrastructure in Antarctica suggests that these bases could quickly shift from scientific hubs to military outposts, challenging the fragile peace in the region and undermining the treaty system.  A treaty system plagued by disagreements and ambiguous interpretations is unlikely to prevent such a scenario. Unless Canberra recognises the growing threat and takes decisive action, Australia's vital interests in Antarctica and the nation's Southern flank could be at serious risk.  Image credit: [**China News Service**](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E5%8D%97%E6%9E%81%E8%80%83%E5%AF%9F%E7%AB%99%E7%A7%A6%E5%B2%AD%E7%AB%99.png#/media/File:%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E5%8D%97%E6%9E%81%E8%80%83%E5%AF%9F%E7%AB%99%E7%A7%A6%E5%B2%AD%E7%AB%99.png) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | *This article was selected by Matthew McKelvie. Matthew is currently pursuing an undergraduate degree in Arts/Advanced Studies at USYD where he majors in Political Economy and International Business.* | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | [**China ‘under siege’: How the US’s hardening China policy is seen in Beijing**](https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/07/china-under-siege)  As long as conflict is avoided, great power competition will remain the defining feature of international politics for the coming decades. But as Dr Yu Jie, writing for Chatham House, [**points out**](https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/07/china-under-siege), “While much has been written in international relations circles about changing US perceptions of China, there has been much less analysis of the shift in Beijing’s own strategic thinking.” This gap should be actively closed. Folks need not see eye-to-eye with Beijing's calculations, analysis, and world views. Rather, through gaining an appreciation of how China’s elite perceive American rhetoric and actions, a framework can be constructed to analyse and explain current and future Chinese decision making.  The report itself covers four "key issues": 1) the global order; 2) economic security; 3) regional flashpoints; and 4) the war in Ukraine. Throughout, three trends are identified. First, that foreign policy, like all policy, decision making has been centralised under Xi Jinping and thus his priority for self-reliance will shape China’s international engagement. Second, Beijing has "de-prioritised" aspects of the US-China relationship that had previously acted as "stabilisers" – such as trade and investment. Third, Beijing will be cautious around, but not concede on, flashpoints and areas it diverges on with America.  Image credit: [**Wikimedia Commons**](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Xinhuamen_Gate_of_Zhongnanhai_across_Changan_Street_2.JPG) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | *This article was selected by Ethan Pooley. Ethan completed an undergraduate course in Political Science and International Studies and is taking a postgraduate course in Public Policy.* | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **What else we're reading** | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | * *ABC News* [**reports**](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-19/china-philippines-boat-collision/104244402) on Chinese and Philippine ships colliding again in disputed waters, leaving the countries trading blame. * Jeffrey Ding [**argues**](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/innovation-fallacy-artificial-intelligence) in *Foreign Affairs* that while both the United States and China aim to lead the Fourth Industrial Revolution through technological innovation, the true determinant of success will be each country’s ability to effectively diffuse and integrate AI advancements. * Thư Nguyễn Hoàng Anh in *The Interpreter* [**highlights**](https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/australia-asean-maritime-cooperation-focus-whole-risks-losing-sight-parts) the complexities and opportunities in Australia’s partnership with ASEAN, as the region's diversity demands tailored approaches to enhance bilateral relationships and address shared challenges. * Hai Hong Nguyen [**unpacks**](https://thediplomat.com/2024/08/the-significance-of-the-vietnamese-communist-party-chiefs-visit-to-china/) Vietnam's new, recently appointed, Head of State To Lam's first overseas trip to Beijing in *The Diplomat*. * Stephen Dziedzic [**covers**](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-20/australia-indonesia-finalise-defence-agreement/104247632) for*ABC* *News* the much anticipated security pact signed between Indonesia and Australia during a visit to Canberra by the incoming president Prabowo Subianto. * For *The Conversation* Sithembile Mbete [**continues**](https://theconversation.com/africa-on-the-un-security-council-why-the-continent-should-have-two-permanent-seats-236720) a salient discussion in the Global South that calls for reform of the United Nations. * In a blunt [**presentation**](https://theconversation.com/gareth-evans-aukus-is-terrible-for-australian-national-interests-but-were-probably-stuck-with-it-236938?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20August%2019%202024%20-%203069731301&utm_content=Lat) to the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, former foreign minister Gareth Evans sets out his reasons for considering AUKUS not to be in Australia’s interests. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **Upcoming Events** | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **In-person events!**  We're committed to keeping debate about international affairs going, so get involved by attending our in-person events at Glover Cottages on Tuesday nights. Our next event will be held on August 27th: [**"The World As Seen By Australians"**](https://aiiansw.glueup.com/event/the-world-as-seen-by-australians-117261/).  For two decades, the [**Lowy Institute Poll​**](https://poll.lowyinstitute.org/) has tracked Australian attitudes towards major powers including the US and China; on global issues such as climate change, international security, trade, and aid; and on issues closer to home such as immigration, democracy, and the economy. In doing so, the Poll has revealed significant shifts in public opinion and played an influential role in the public debate. It also serves a democratic function, giving the Australian public a voice in the elite preserve of foreign policy.  At this critical moment in global politics, join Ryan Neelam of the Lowy Institute for an exploration of the 2024 Lowy Institute Poll results, and learn how Australian attitudes to the world have changed over two decades.  For further information please email [**nswexec@internationalaffairs.org.au.**](http://nswexec@internationalaffairs.org.au/) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | | | |