

GREAT DECISIONS

Fall 2022 Update

Outer Space • Climate Change • Russia and the U.S. • Biden's Agenda

Outer Space

In July, Russia announced it would leave the International Space Station (ISS), a multinational project involving five space agencies, by the end of 2024. “The decision to leave the station after 2024 has been made,” said Yuri Borisov, the new head of Roscosmos which is the Russian state-controlled space agency. Russia’s plans to leave the ISS is largely due to increasing tensions between Washington and Moscow due to the war in Ukraine. In lieu of being part of the ISS, Russia is looking to cooperate more with China’s space program. However, some doubt if this will come to fruition as China’s space program is already far superior than Russia’s, and it is not likely China will be looking to collaborate with the Russians in terms of space.

With regards to the space rivalry between the United States and China, a new analysis released in August conducted by experts from the U.S. Space Force, Air Force, and Defense Innovation Unit concluded that Beijing has the upper hand in the new space race. These experts cite China’s militarization in space, their plans for an updated space station, and their unwavering vision to accomplish these tasks as a result of having an authoritarian government that doesn’t change policy as much as the United States does.

As tensions rise between the United States and its rivals in outer space, the U.S. Space Force plans to protect U.S. interests to the best of its ability in space. As U.S. private companies such as SpaceX, Virgin Orbit, and United Launch Alliance become more involved in space, the U.S. Space

Force has increased collaboration with these companies to safeguard their goals.

Recommended Readings

Chang, Kenneth and Nechepurenko, Ivan, “Russia Says It Will Quit the International Space Station After 2024,” *The New York Times* (July 26, 2022)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/science/russia-space-station.html>

Howard, Brad, “How U.S. Space Force plans to police outer space,” *CNBC* (June 3, 2022)

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/03/how-the-us-space-force-plans-to-police-outer-space.html>

Kluger, Jeffrey, “China Will Ultimately Overtake the U.S. in Outer Space, a New Study Warns,” *TIME* (August 26, 2022)

<https://time.com/6208992/china-us-space/>

Climate Change

Over the summer, President Biden announced \$2.3 billion to build infrastructure that can withstand extreme weather and natural disasters. He made the announcement as an extreme heatwave affected tens of millions of people across the United States. “Climate change is literally an existential threat to our nation and to the world,” President Biden said. “The health of our citizens and our communities is... at stake. So, we have to act.”

On the congressional level, the Build Back Better Act was never implemented due to push back from Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV). While the Build Back Better Act never made it to law, the Inflation Reduction Act did, being signed into law by President Biden in August after passing the senate and house.

The Inflation Reduction Act is far smaller than the \$1.75 trillion version initially proposed last October, however it does include provisions designed to protect the climate. In a bid to slash U.S. greenhouse gas emissions 40% by 2030, the new bill includes electric vehicle tax credits, clean energy manufacturing, and investments in environmental justice communities to name a few.

Recommended Readings

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Luhby, Tami and Lobosco, Katie, “What’s in the Democrats’ package on climate, health care and taxes,” *CNN* (August 16, 2022)

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Russia and the U.S.

The current war in Ukraine continues to put massive strain on U.S.-Russia relations. Russia’s increasing isolation from the west has led to destabilized global energy and resource markets resulting in a global food shortage. As a result of Russia’s increased isolation from the west, it has strengthened ties with China and has also turned to North Korea and Iran for intelligence and military equipment.

Since Russia’s withdrawal of the capital region of Kyiv and Chernihiv, many civilians have re-

ported war crimes committed by Russian forces such as executions, torture, and rape. Since the summer, most of the fighting between Russian and Ukrainian forces has been in the east and south of the country. The Russian seizure of Ukrainian ports and blockade of Ukrainian food exports has augmented the global food crisis further. Some relief came when Russia and Ukraine signed an agreement in July to free more than 20 million tons of grain from Russian controlled ports.

In July, the UN Human Rights Office recorded over 5,000 civilian deaths since the start of the conflict. The war has also displaced almost seven million people forcing many to neighboring countries such as Moldova and Poland.

The United States continues to provide military assistance to Ukraine. In early September, Secretary of State Blinken pledged continued support for Ukraine during a trip to Kyiv, and applauded Ukraine for retaking significant territory in the Kharkiv region in the east.

Recommended Readings

Center for Preventive Action, “Conflict in Ukraine,” *CFR* (September 12, 2022)

<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ukraine>

The Visual Journalism Team, “Ukraine war in maps: Tracking the Russian invasion,” *BBC News* (September 13, 2022)

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60506682>

Biden’s Agenda

Biden’s foreign policy is mainly focused on China and Russia. He has claimed that China is the greatest competitor of the United States, and that Russia is the biggest threat to U.S. security and alliances.

When it comes to U.S.-China relations, the biggest contention point remains the status of Taiwan. The Biden administration has on multiple occasions signaled its support for Taiwan, sending U.S. naval ships through the Taiwanese strait and influencing weapons sales to Taiwan. All of this has angered Beijing which doesn’t take any gesture in support of Tai-

The UPDATES take into account events up to September 15, 2022.

wanese sovereignty lightly.

More recently, House speaker Nancy Pelosi travelled to Taiwan in August further creating tension with Beijing, as she is the highest-ranking member of U.S. government to visit Taiwan in 25 years. During her trip, Pelosi met with Taiwan's president Tsai Ing-Wen to whom she offered U.S. support. "Today the world faces a choice between democracy and autocracy," Ms. Pelosi said. "America's determination to preserve democracy here in Taiwan and around the world remains ironclad." Beijing condemned Pelosi's trip, responding with plans for military exercises near Taiwan.

In order to better compete with China, President Biden signed into law the CHIPS and Science Act in August to provide \$280 billion in order to build up U.S. manufacturing and tech sectors in order to rival those in China.

With regards to U.S.-Russia relations, the situation has only deteriorated as the war in Ukraine drags on. President Biden firmly stands with Ukraine, and his administration has coordinated sanctions against Russia and weapons shipments to Ukraine. In keeping with Biden's support for trans-Atlantic alliances, he signed NATO accession protocols for Finland and Sweden in August, enlarging the military alliance in the face of Russian aggression.

Recommended Readings

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<https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/02/world/pelosi-taiwan>

Kanno-Youngs, Zolan, "Biden Signs Industrial Policy Bill Aimed at Bolstering Competition With China," *The New York Times* (August 9, 2022)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/09/us/politics/biden-semiconductor-chips-china.html>

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Wong, Edward, "On U.S. Foreign Policy, the New Boss Acts a Lot Like the Old One," *The New York Times* (July 24, 2022)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/24/us/politics/biden-trump-foreign-policy.html>

*The UPDATES were written by Graham Nau,
assistant editor at FPA.*