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Multilateral Dialogue Geneva

Geneva Barometer

Developments in the Geneva-based international organisations from mid-February to the beginning of April 2022

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The “Geneva Barometer” takes an occasional look at selected developments in the international organizations based in Geneva.

In recent years, the international organizations in Geneva have been used to headwinds. Compared with this, however, the consequences of Russia’s war against Ukraine are a veritable hurricane that is sweeping through all multilateral fora in Geneva. In addition, several organizations are also concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Tigray, as well as in Yemen and Afghanistan. In other news: The International Labour Organization elected a new Director-General. In the discussion on the suspension of patent rights for COVID vaccines and medicines (the so-called TRIPS waiver), which has been pending for more than a year, a compromise proposal has been presented.

Russia's attack on Ukraine dominates discussions in all fora

Russia's attack on Ukraine has been strongly condemned in numerous Geneva-based organisations, and efforts are increasingly being made to isolate Russia in multilateral organisations for violating the most basic conventions of international law. Moreover, the Lukashenka regime is also feeling the consequences of its support for Putin's course. Meanwhile, numerous actors in Geneva are working under high pressure to counter the disastrous humanitarian consequences.

Condemnation in the Human Rights Council and other fora - Clear majority for independent commission of inquiry

As to be expected, Russia's war of aggression dominated the 49th session of the UN Human Rights Council (28 February - 1 April). At the very start, the members decided by majority vote to schedule an urgent debate to discuss the question of establishing a commission of inquiry. In addition, numerous participating foreign ministers addressed Russia's invasion of Ukraine in their statements. Before the speech of the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, numerous delegates left the room in an action officially led by Ukraine and coordinated by Germany and others² - and missed an absurdly memorable speech in which Lavrov claimed, among other things, that Ukraine was following in the tradition of Nazi Germany and spoke of a genocide of Russians and Russian-speaking citizens. Lavrov was virtually alone in making such statements, even if they were echoed in a weakened form by a number of ambassadors from autocratic countries.

What was remarkable, however, was the sharp criticism of Russia's actions, even from countries (e.g. the Gambia) that are usually reluctant to criticise other countries. Accordingly, it was not surprising that on 4 March there was a clear majority in favour of setting up an independent commission of inquiry for the situation in Ukraine (32 in favour, 13

¹ This issue was drafted with the support of Maria Lehmann.

² This also happened during Lavrov's intervention at the Conference on Disarmament.

abstentions (including from China, India and Venezuela) and 2 against votes from Russia and Eritrea).³ Strikingly, several countries (such as Brazil) criticised the draft resolution submitted by Ukraine, sometimes harshly, for its alleged imbalance, but ultimately voted in favour of it and thus for the establishment of a three-member commission of inquiry.⁴ In the weeks that followed, the conflict continued to dominate the Human Rights Council, with 47 UN Special Rapporteurs supporting both the establishment of a mechanism of enquiry and accountability, and the decision of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to open an investigation. Under the so-called Item 3, Russia's actions were also discussed regarding the protection of children in armed conflicts. In a Joint Statement, 51 states also criticised the deterioration of the human rights situation in Russia, including the arbitrary arrest of over 13,000 people and changes to the Criminal Code.⁵ Support for Russia also played a role in the discussion on the situation in Belarus.

Beyond the Human Rights Council, the leaders of other international organisations and fora (such as the World Council of Churches, of which the Russian Orthodox Church is a member) condemned the war, but often without explicitly criticising Russia. In the case of humanitarian organisations, it is also due to the effort to keep the necessary channels of dialogue open for humanitarian access. The outgoing Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Guy Ryder (United Kingdom), was more outspoken: he described the attack as "one of the darkest chapters in the century-long history" of the ILO. The World Health Organization (WHO), in turn, strongly condemned the bombing of health facilities infrastructures: Since 24 February, the WHO has recorded more than 142 attacks (April 9).⁶ Together with the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the children's agency UNICEF, the WHO drew attention as early as mid-March to

the fact that attacks on health care and health workers have a direct impact on access to basic health services - especially for women, children and other vulnerable groups - and called for an immediate ceasefire and unhindered access for emergency medical aid.

Wide-ranging support and assistance among Geneva-based organisations for the Ukrainian people

Several international fora addressed the various dramatic humanitarian consequences of the Russian invasion:

1. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), more than 11 million Ukrainian people were forced to flee by the beginning of April, of whom more than 4,5 million left the country (more than half to Poland), and more than 7.1 million were internally displaced.⁷ Against this background, the UN Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, warned that without widespread international solidarity, a catastrophe would be imminent. Overall, the UNHCR was confident about the cooperation with the largest host countries, including Poland, and about European solidarity in general. At the same time, however, the UNHCR warns not to lose sight of other urgent crises and to award the solidarity shown in the current situation to other refugee crises as well. UNHCR and IOM support the affected countries in many ways, including in the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse of refugees.
2. The unprecedented humanitarian situation in the country prompted both the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and UNHCR to issue appeals for donations. OCHA reported raising a total of 1.14 billion US dollars in the period from March to May,⁸ UNHCR's Regional Refugee Response

³ This voting behaviour is also illustrated in our first [map of the month](#) of March.

⁴ The members are Erik Møse (Norway), Jasminka Džumhur (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Pablo de Greiff (Colombia). More information [here](#).

⁵ The Joint Statement can be found [here](#).

⁶ The newest numbers can be found [here](#).

⁷ The newest numbers can be found [here](#).

⁸ The most important contributors so far have been the USA, the European Commission, the UN Humanitarian Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan, Norway, and Germany (in this order, as of 31 March).

Plan with 12 other partners amounts to 550 million US dollars (almost all the money has been pledged, but only more than half of it has been paid so far). However, the required amount had to be raised in the meantime to reflect the needs on the ground. At the end of March, the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Peter Maurer, visited both Ukraine and Russia to promote safe humanitarian corridors, the protection of the population and civilian infrastructure, and advocate for prisoner visits. At the same time, the ICRC has massively increased its presence in the region and established logistical hubs in neighbouring countries. In recent weeks, more than 500 tonnes of aid have been delivered. In parallel, the ICRC and OCHA are working to establish safe humanitarian corridors.

3. WHO supplies health commodities and provides logistical capacity for the delivery of drugs, diagnostics, and preventive medicines. WHO also supports partner organisations such as the Ukrainian Ministry of Health in transferring patients to EU countries. Since the beginning of the crisis, WHO has provided more than USD 40 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for the Ukrainian population.
4. One consequence of the war, that has been raising alarm bells in Geneva for weeks, is the risk of famine, as Ukraine is a major supplier to the World Food Programme (WFP) and to many developing countries. Ukraine supplies more than 50% of the WFP's wheat, and 18 African and least developed countries import at least 50% of their wheat from Russia or Ukraine.

At the same time, the ICRC and the OCHA are also trying to put their reputation as neutral actors to the test. On 28 March, UN Secretary-General Guterres mandated OCHA chief Martin Griffiths to negotiate a ceasefire. The tightrope that humanitarian actors have to walk was demonstrated by the reactions to ICRC head Maurer's interaction with

Lavrov during his visit to Russia, which was perceived as too cordial, and the irritations over his request to be allowed to open an office in the southern Russian city of Rostov-on-Don. The ICRC rejected accusations from the Ukrainian side that it wanted to run a refugee camp on Russian soil. It merely wanted to open an office in Rostov to reach parts of Ukraine that were difficult to access with humanitarian aid.

Increasing isolation of Russia - vote for exclusion from the Human Rights Council

Russia's breach of international law has quickly led to calls for a suspension of Russia's participation in international organisations - remarkably also in those fora that are à priori more technical in nature. This is not always easy to implement, neither legally nor politically. Nevertheless, in addition to Ukraine, the USA, Canada, the UK, and the EU are making efforts to make Russia feel the consequences of its actions in international organisations:

On 22 March, the ILO's Governing Body decided to significantly restrict cooperation with Russia and to suspend technical cooperation. In addition, the relocation of the ILO regional office in Moscow is being considered. The resolution was adopted by 42 of the 56 Governing Body members,⁹ with Brazil, India, Indonesia, and China voting against or abstaining.

The 49th Human Rights Council session did not go as far as recommending expelling Russia from the Human Rights Council to UN General Assembly (UNGA). However, following the revelation of war crimes in Bucha in Ukraine, the USA announced that it would raise the matter at the UNGA. Despite considerable pressure from Russia on other countries in the run-up, the required 2/3 majority (abstentions were not counted) was reached in the vote on 7 April (93 votes in favour, 58 abstentions, 24 against).¹⁰ This was the first vote in favour of suspending a country's membership from the Human Rights Council since Libya in 2011. On the

⁹ An overview of the composition of the ILO Governing Body can be found [here](#).

¹⁰ The voting result is also shown in the [map of the month](#) of April.

same day, Russia withdrew its membership by its own accord.

Russia's exclusion from the WTO, on the other hand, is hardly feasible: There is no legal basis for this, and a decision in the General Council - which is disputed among experts - would be doomed to fail, not least because of the consensus principle in the WTO. However, a group of countries has taken alternative measures since the beginning of the conflict:

1. This includes suspending the most favoured nation principle against Russia by Ukraine, the G7, the EU and some other countries such as Australia. This principle is a cornerstone of the WTO, according to which trade advantages granted to one contracting partner must be granted to all trading partners. The suspension is justified by Article 21, which allows an exception if essential security interests are affected.
2. The EU and the US excluded Russia from the group of developed countries and generally refuse to talk directly to Russian delegates. Direct communication with Russia was also reduced within plurilateral initiatives.
3. In addition, a total of 41 countries announced the freezing of discussions on Belarus' WTO accession.

Even at the World Telecommunication Standardisation Assembly (WTSA) of the ITU, the conflict influenced the discussions: In this vein, Russian candidates were rejected as working group chairs. Against the opposition of China and individual African countries, Ukraine, the EU, the United Kingdom and the USA, among others, were successful in demanding that Russian candidates be removed from the nomination list altogether. In several fora, Ukraine (including ICANN, the global coordinator for the allocation of unique names and addresses on the internet) has asked for top-level domains to be removed from the register in order to prevent Russian propaganda, disinformation and cyber-attacks. Experts, however, are critical of such demands: on the one hand, they suspect that the Russian government would be prepared for such a

measure based on past tests, and on the other hand, such a step would cause technical difficulties.

At the beginning of March, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) also suspended Russia's observer status. At the end of March, CERN suspended scientific cooperation with partners from Russia and Belarus.

The Geneva-based World Economic Forum (WEF) had already broken off its relations with all Russian entities and entities subject to sanctions at the beginning of March. Some Russian oligarchs also supported the Forum financially in the past.

Outlook

The condemnation of Russia's breach of international law in view of its invasion of Ukraine is supported by a broad group of countries, as the votes in the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council make clear. The number of allies who support Putin's regime unconditionally only includes hardliner countries such as Belarus, Eritrea, North Korea and Syria. Even China, Venezuela and Cuba abstained on a case-by-case basis. However, this does not mean that Russia is completely isolated. A quarter of UN members, including heavyweights such as China, India and Indonesia, but also a significant number of African countries, continue to avoid condemning Russia's actions. The exclusion of Russia from the Human Rights Council is a remarkable signal, but about half of the member states still abstained, despite the atrocities of Bucha.

Moreover, apart from this decision, it is striking that attempts to isolate Russia in international fora are often driven by 'the usual suspects' - usually the US, the EU, Norway, the UK, Iceland, Japan, Australia, New Zealand or Canada. In addition, there is Switzerland, most of the EU candidate countries and some close Latin American allies. Other groups, including the so-called BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries, warn against a "politicisation" of the multilateral organisations and reject Russia's isolation in these fora. Even in the camp of countries that support initiatives to isolate Putin's regime, there are voices that

warn that the "no business as usual" approach should not lead to "no business at all" and the loss of all channels of communication.

49th UN Human Rights Council

With five full weeks, the 49th session of the UN Human Rights Council was not only the longest to date, but also, in the words of Argentinian Council President Villegas, a significant challenge for multilateral diplomacy in itself. Given the geopolitical context and this year's full membership of all permanent members of the UN Security Council, UN High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet urged strong and visionary leadership already at the outset. Although the war in Ukraine dominated the debates and some countries opposed the "politicisation" of human rights and country-specific mandates, accusing each other of disinformation, put forward several points of order and amendments to resolutions, a total of 35 resolutions were adopted (16 of them after a vote, 19 by consensus). Hence, progress was made on other dossiers as well. For example, the mandates of numerous special rapporteurs and investigative mechanisms, such as those on South Sudan, Belarus and Syria, were extended. A new mission was established for Nicaragua and 11 special procedures mandate holders were appointed, including on climate change and Afghanistan.¹¹ The long-awaited report of the High Commissioner on Xinjiang, whose publication several delegations and nearly 200 NGOs have been urging for since months,¹² however is still pending. At least a date has been set: her visit to China and Xinjiang is planned for May.

New leadership at ILO

The first African Director-General of the International Labour Organization

The first African Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Gilbert F. Houngbo was elected as the ILO's 11th Director-

General on 25 March, succeeding Guy Ryder of the UK, who has held the post for 10 years. The first African Director-General, who is the former prime minister of Togo and still President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), will take the helm of the organisation in October.

On March 25, the ILO Governing Body, composed of representatives of governments, workers, and employers,¹³ convened and elected Houngbo from among five candidates for the post, whose experience, both within the ILO and in other international and national fields brought him to the top in just two rounds of voting. Four policy priorities were of particular interest to ILO observers: the informal economy, gender equity, the ILO's role in multilateral cooperation, and its normative future. With regard to informal work in particular, his efforts as Togolese prime minister to improve social security for informal sector workers and promote opportunities for formal work were viewed positively.

In his inaugural speech, Houngbo envisioned the creation of a multi-stakeholder "Global Coalition for Social Justice." Moreover, he wants to establish the ILO as an "arbitrator" for labour standards in trade agreements. In particular, he reaffirmed his commitment to represent the voices of those who rely on the ILO, recalling the four billion people in the world who lack access to social protection, the more than 200 million women and men affected by unemployment, the 160 million children who engage in child labour, and the 1.6 billion people working in the informal sector. He also spoke out against discrimination, violence and harassment in the workplace, grouping these all of these as expressions of unacceptable social injustice.

In addition to electing a new Director-General, the Governing Body also decided to add occupational safety and health to the existing four categories currently covered by the ILO Framework on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The Governing Body instructed the ILO Director-General to

¹¹ An overview of all mandate holders is provided [here](#).

¹² The call can be found [here](#).

¹³ The ILO Governing Body is composed of 56 regular members (28 governments, 14 employers and 14 work-

ers) and 66 alternate members (28 governments, 19 employers and 19 employees). For a map of the current regular members, see our March Map of the Month [here](#).

submit a draft resolution on this issue for consideration at the International Labour Conference in June 2022. This would be a far-reaching decision: if adopted, the proposed amendment¹⁴ would indicate that all member states would have an obligation to respect and promote safe and healthy working conditions.

World Health Organization

Dramatic appeal by WHO Director-General on the situation in Tigray

At a press conference in Geneva on March 16, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director General, urged the world not to forget the humanitarian crisis in Tigray, saying that even amid the war in Ukraine there is “nowhere on Earth” where people are more at risk than the isolated region of northern Ethiopia. He said such was the scale of the crisis, it would be a dereliction of his professional duty not to speak out.

The Tigrayan Director-General has a personal stake in the crisis and has incurred the wrath of the Ethiopian government in the past after accusing it of placing the region under a de facto blockade. Prime minister Abiy Ahmed’s government has accused him of bias, and of spreading misinformation. Addressing these concerns, he responded that in his position he has a duty to protect and promote health wherever it is under threat.

Since mid-December the UN has been unable to get emergency food supplies into the northern Ethiopian region. In recent weeks limited access has been granted, however, the WHO and doctors on the ground have said the amount arriving is nowhere near enough to meet the needs of the population and logistic challenges including a lack of fuel to reach remote places. Hospitals in Tigray reported that patients were dying due to a lack of medical supplies, especially people with HIV, Tuberculosis, hypertension, diabetes and cancer are at a particular risk and have not been able to receive treatment for more than 6 months. Given this unparalleled health crisis, WHO continues to call

on Ethiopia and Eritrea to end the blockade and allow safe access for humanitarian supplies and workers to save lives.

Humanitarian Aid: Funding gap for acute crises worldwide

Pledging conferences on Yemen and Afghanistan fell massively short of expectations

While most of the attention these days is focused on the crisis in Ukraine, aid organizations are warning about the risk of neglecting other, similarly acute crises. This is particularly true for Yemen and Afghanistan. While at a donor conference for Ukraine on March 1, the target \$1.7 billion set by OCHA and the UNHCR was almost fully reached, a donor conference for Yemen two weeks later, however raised only \$1.3 billion, less than one-third of the \$4.3 billion needed. This was a major disappointment not only for former UN Special Envoy for Yemen and current UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths. For the world’s worst humanitarian crisis in Yemen, only 36 of 193 UN member states were among the donors, including only one country from the region, Kuwait. After 7 years of war, nearly 80% of the population, about 23.4 million people are in need of assistance and protection.¹⁵ Due to underfunding, almost 2/3 of the major UN aid organisations have already had to stop or to cut their aid in recent months. A good third of Yemen’s wheat supply also come from Ukraine. In view of rising food prices, the situation threatens to worsen. Around 19 million people could thus be affected by acute food insecurity by June.

A similarly bleak picture is emerging from Afghanistan: since June last year, humanitarian needs have tripled. In addition to the worst drought in almost 30 years, the main reason being that since the takeover of the Taliban, the economy has effectively collapsed. Meanwhile, 60% of the population, 24.4 million people are in need of life-saving assistance in 2022: 95% of Afghans do not have enough to eat and 9 million are at risk of famine. To avoid hunger, families are reportedly resorting to selling their children and organs, according to UN Secretary

¹⁴ The ILO declaration can be found [here](#)

¹⁵ An overview of the pledges provided can be found [here](#), more information on the event [here](#).

General Guterres.¹⁶ Back in January, OCHA and UN-HCR jointly launched a \$5 billion appeal, the largest ever made for a single country. While nearly all the funds, around \$600 million were received to help some 6 million displaced Afghans in neighbouring countries, only about 13% has been raised for Afghans inside the country. Accordingly, a donor conference on March 31, which Germany co-hosted alongside the UK and Qatar, called for \$4.4 billion. However, with \$2.44 billion 41 donors only pledged just over half the target amount. Like at the Yemen conference, long-time donors such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were conspicuously silent. The conference was overshadowed by a decision of the Taliban to maintain a ban on access to education for girls from the sixth grade onwards. Germany and numerous other countries sharply criticised the decision.

Syrian Constitutional Committee

Also, two-and-a-half years after the launching of the Syrian Constitutional Committee, which aims to draft a constitution for the country, no agreement could be reached at the now seventh meeting of the Small Body held from March 21-25 at the Hotel Intercontinental in Geneva. According to UN Special Envoy Geir Pedersen, the last meeting, held in October 2021, was already a major disappointment. Although this time there was an agreement on the methodology, the discussions of the first days, again did not result in the desired progress. Experts and many diplomats have long been critical of the credibility and effectiveness of the body, partly because of the lacking commitment on the part of the Syrian regime, the divisions within the opposition, and the absence of other important actors and de-facto authorities at the negotiating table in Geneva.

Tough negotiation rounds in the World Trade Organization

In an informal setting, the so-called Quad Group (EU, USA, India, South Africa) negotiated a compromise text regarding the disputed release of vaccine patents ('TRIPS Waiver'). The proposal currently on

the table concerns the "ingredients and processes necessary for the manufacture of the COVID-19 vaccine."¹⁷ Additionally, WTO members have six months after adoption to decide whether the waiver should also be extended to the manufacture and distribution of COVID-19 diagnostics and therapeutics. The patent rights, however, are only to be shared with developing countries whose global vaccine export rate was lower than 10% in 2021. Thus, China would not be granted the right to benefit from the patents' exemption. Furthermore, it has not yet been decided whether the exemption would apply for three or five years. Regardless, an extension of the measure should only be possible with the approval of the General Council.¹⁸ This compromise differs quite strongly from the original radical proposal of India and South Africa, but also goes further than the EU's previous counterproposals.

However, the proposed text is highly controversial. US Trade Representative Katherine Tai spoke of the text as not being a done deal, while civil society organisations in both India and the EU are urging their governments to reject the proposal. On the other hand, some diplomats and experts argue that patent rights, especially for vaccines, are not a crucial variable for a more equitable global distribution of vaccines. Nevertheless, all sides have so far been reluctant to officially pull the plug, given that no one wants to be blamed for the failure of the talks. Moreover, all WTO members would still have to agree to the compromise proposal, including Switzerland and the UK, who are major sceptics of a TRIPS waiver.

The debate on the replacement of Appellate Body members was rekindled after Mexico, on behalf of 123 members, submitted a proposal to kick-start the selection process for the 52nd time. The EU and Nigeria also underlined the need for a two-tier dispute settlement system. The US replied that it was unable to support the proposal unless the WTO initiated fundamental reforms.

The EU also launched its third WTO dispute settlement case since the beginning of the year. On 30

¹⁶ The speech of the UN Secretary General can be found [here](#). The conference can be watched [here](#).

¹⁷ <https://tradebetablog.wordpress.com/2022/03/17/quad-hopes-covid-deal-waiver/>

¹⁸ Ibid

March, the EU delegation asked for consultations regarding the UK. The EU is concerned about UK's promotion of low-carbon energy projects, which, are not being implemented with respect to the principle of national treatment.

Redistribution of ITU-T mandates

The nine-day World Telecommunications Standardisation Assembly (WTSA) of the Telecommunication Union (ITU) took place at the beginning of March. It was initially scheduled to take place in India in 2020 but was held two years later in Geneva due to the pandemic. The WTSA, which meets every four years, is the most important event for the standardisation sector of the ITU (ITU-T). Over the course of the assembly, ITU member states appoint the chairs and vice-chairs of study groups and adopt the work programme for the next four years. Some of the proposals and resolutions introduced there go beyond the standardisation scope of internet and telecommunications (ICT) and increasingly address questions of new and emerging technologies. China's strong presence in filling the advertised positions was again remarkable this year, when it entered the race with 13 candidates, of which twelve were appointed. In addition, South Korea, Japan, and India are also well represented in the leadership positions.

At this meeting, resolution proposals circulated with language that – once again – included terminology of the previously rejected "NewIP" proposal. The controversy surrounding the latter already came up in 2019 when the proposal was first rejected. Nevertheless, since then, partial text passages of the initial proposal have repeatedly surfaced in various committees and did so again at this year's WTSA. Nonetheless, they were not adopted by the Assembly.

Comment

In the past long-time Geneva observers have repeatedly, and reasonably so, complained about a tendency to politicise multilateral fora, which hinders technical work and progress. Even now, some states that oppose the ostracism of Russia in multilateral fora continue to resort to the argument

that Geneva organisations are being overly politicised. However, is this argument still valid when not only the spirit of multilateral cooperation, but also several fundamentals of international law - including the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the CSCE Final Act - are undermined by a member state?

If one is serious about value- and rule-based multilateralism, this question must be answered with a firm no. One of the most important ingredients for multilateral cooperation is a minimum of trust - this has been irretrievably lost with Russia under Putin. The exclusion from the Human Rights Council is only a logical consequence of these actions. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has rightly shaken multilateral Geneva. Only time will tell how much multilateral cooperation has been permanently damaged and how the role and functioning of multilateral organisations must and can be rethought and redefined.

It also remains to be seen whether Russia's actions will weaken the autocratic alliance, which has often revolved around the increasingly emerging China-Russia axis. There are some indications that the centre of power here will merely shift more towards China: so far, the mistrust towards Russia has not visibly rubbed off on China. Another side effect: China's policies in Xinjiang and its role in various Geneva fora are currently less in the spotlight.

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