

# Weekly Newsletter

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**CENTER OF POLICY  
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## Celebrating 50 years of Bangladesh Liberation

~ Akanksha Singh



December 2021 marks the golden jubilee of the Bangladesh liberation war of 1971 which ultimately led to the independence of the formerly known East Pakistan province from Pakistan. The war was the third Indo-Pak war since the two countries became independent from British rule in 1947. Even today, it is hailed as India's greatest win, showcasing our military prowess and superiority. It also finally led to the world acknowledging India as an emerging regional superpower.

The partition led to the creation of two nations, India and Pakistan with Pakistan in turn being divided into West Pakistan and East Pakistan and India in the middle. The only unifying feature of the two nations eventually was the religion of the citizens. Beyond this, from their language to their culture and lives, everything was completely separate. The average Bengali Muslim had more in common with a Bengali Hindu at that point than a Pakistani Muslim. This distinction led to the people of East Pakistan to feel a certain alienation vis-à-vis West Pakistan. Added to this, the attempts of West Pakistan to suppress their culture, their language, Bengali and their political aspirations further fueled the rebellion within the people.

The elections of 1970 in Pakistan would forever change the futures of the two parts of the country. The elections resulted in the win of the Awami League of East Pakistan, with its leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the clear Prime Ministerial choice of the

people. However, the then president of Pakistan Yahya Khan refused to accept the results and instead imposed martial law. The Pakistan army then carried out a fierce military crackdown on the Awami League and all the rebelling groups in East Pakistan, who were by then calling themselves the 'Mukti Bahini' and demanding creation of a separate nation called Bangladesh, causing millions of them to cross the border and seek refuge in India's West Bengal and most northeastern states. With the increasing refugee crisis in our country and the human rights violations being carried out by the military in our neighborhood, India eventually had to intervene.

Our forces quickly took action and within 13 days of our involvement, the Pakistani troops surrendered their arms in front of the Indian army, signaling the defeat of West Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh. The quick victory of Indian forces led to immense celebration throughout the country and in Bangladesh who were celebrating their independence from Pakistan. This war has become somewhat of folklore in India with references to our victory still being a source of immense pride for all citizens. Pakistan suffered a humiliating defeat and has since then blamed India for intervening in its affairs and has doubled its attack and attempts at separating Kashmir from India as a form of vengeance. It has even referred to the Bengali movement for independence as 'Indian-sponsored terrorism'.

The National Register of Citizens finalized in Assam marked the cut-off date for citizenship as March 24, 1971 which was the day before Pakistan launched its military operation in East Pakistan and thus led to an influx of refugees from the then East Pakistan into India. The almost 2 million rendered as aliens

through this led to a brief deterioration of our friendly ties with Bangladesh.

However, our prime minister Modi has used the golden jubilee of Bangladesh to reaffirm our ties with the country. He visited the nation earlier this year, his first international visit after the

coronavirus pandemic. The liberation of Bangladesh stands as a true symbol of power of democracy and the voice of the people.

## **Russia, NATO and the Indian stance: An impending era of non-Alignment**

*~Aakarshan Singh*



This week, the Soviet Union imploded thirty years ago, following seven decades of worldwide dominance. The disintegration of the Soviet Union effectively ended the post-World War II global power structure. The Soviet Union's downfall was a global shock like no other for India's political elites and the national security apparatus. Few countries have had as much influence on contemporary India's development as Russia. The 1917 Revolution, the Soviet model of economic development, and Russian geopolitics all had a significant effect on India's worldview in the twentieth century.

Russia's relationship with the West always has ramifications for India's foreign ties. The Great Game of the nineteenth century between the British Raj and imperial Russia involved Soviet assistance for Asian revolutionary movements, Russia's engagement in World War II, and Moscow's protracted Cold War with the West, which could serve as an impending doom in this new strife. India is highly involved in a good realignment of Moscow's ties with the West as Russia and the West begin a new discussion on European security. The emergence of China and the resulting geopolitical upheaval in Asia has increased India's stakes in US-Russia ties. Despite its strategic links with China, India needs safe, natural gas and oil sources for its growth and economic future. Russia is a trustworthy and reliable partner in every sector of India. While the Chinese and Pakistani trucks appear unstoppable, India also requires Western countries to rein in China's hubris, expansionism, and violence. Modi's international diplomacy has established India as a self-assured nation motivated only by its interests and is not susceptible to foreign influences. Under Modi, India maintains a significant relationship and collaborations

with opposing or fighting states, rather than taking sides. Russia and the United States are strained mostly due to perceptual disagreements on global and regional concerns. This increases strategic concern on both sides and contributes to the current strategic deadlock. At the same time, some of these standoffs contribute to the current "Cold Peace" between these two countries. Even though bilateral concerns create sensitivity towards each other, India can bring both Russia and the US to the bargaining table as a significant global power. While the global geopolitical structure has been rapidly changing in recent years, ties between the two Cold War enemies, Russia and the United States, have not improved as planned. Instead, their bilateral relations exhibit the same Cold War fury. This has a tremendous impact on the global security system. Concerning the Indo-Pacific, Russian policymakers have been concerned about establishing this geopolitical arc on its fringe since 2015, when this area came to fame. The Putin leadership believes that the United States' geopolitical maneuvers were primarily to surround Russia.

The establishment of the Quad as a security framework heightened Russia's fears and exacerbated the country's fictitious strategic uncertainty. However, it should be noted that Quad is present to checkmate China's assertive and imperialist intentions in the Indo-Pacific area. As the most recent virtual Summit underlined, the Quad encompasses additional areas of collaboration such as climate change, sustainable security, and so on. It is inaccurate for Russian foreign policymakers to believe that the Quad is "directed" against Russia. Aside from some of the previously listed paths, another critical point of contention between the two countries is the issue of democracy and human rights.

The unexpected arrest and conviction of Alexei Navalny have caused friction between the two countries. President Biden's statements against President Putin, in which he referred to him as a "Killer," sparked a heated exchange of words between the two countries and social networking sites.

Similarly, Russia's scepticism of the "legitimacy" of President Biden's election in the early days after he took office raised suspicions in the Biden Administration's mind about Russia. The possibility of blocking Western social media sites in Russia has further strained bilateral cooperation. India urgently requires safe, natural gas and oil sources for its growth and economic future, and Russia has shown to be a trustworthy and dependable partner in all areas.

To conclude, we can safely say that the Western world has a long history of bloodshed, persecution, and conflict. Nobody should be astonished if another conflict breaks out. Thereby, instead of pushing and pursuing India to take sides, western nations should learn the art of forbearance from India to negotiate red lines with Russia rather than scaremongering.

## **Tea-for-Oil: New Barter to Repay Debt**

*~Aamiya Dhand*

Sri Lanka will export tea to Iran to pay for past oil imports. The South Asian country turns to the commodity as a payment alternative in the face of depleting foreign reserves and sanctions against Iran. According to the Tehran Times, representatives from the two countries signed a memorandum of agreement on Tuesday, which quotes Iran's Trade Promotion Organization, which indicates Sri Lanka will settle \$251 million in oil import dues to Iran by trading tea. According to a BBC News report, Sri Lanka's plantation ministry head, Ramesh Pathirana, suggests selling \$5 million in tea to Iran each month until the debt is paid off. The National Iranian Oil Company owes the state-owned Ceylon Petroleum Corporation \$250.9 million. Because US sanctions restrict dealings with Iranian banks, Sri Lanka was unable to settle the debt in any other way, but the new agreement, according to the country, will not violate either US or UN sanctions.

### **Sri Lankan Oil Crises**

The oil crisis in Sri Lanka began on November 3, 2017, when rumors arose that had a fuel shipment belonging to Lanka IOC (Indian Oil Company) rejected. The rumor was later verified to be accurate, and the justification given was that the fuel in the rejected cargo did not meet the required criteria. The following day, Minister of Petroleum Resources Development Arjuna Ranatunga addressed the media about the issue. However, the Ministry of Petroleum Resources Development claimed enough gasoline in the reserves to last till November 9, 2017. However, Asanka Ranawala, the leader of the Ceylon Petroleum Union, disagreed. As the tense situation worsened, the general public began panic buying, causing reserves to deplete faster than predicted. However, the crisis was ended when the ship Nevaska Lady, carrying 40,000 metric tons, finally arrived on November 11, 2017.

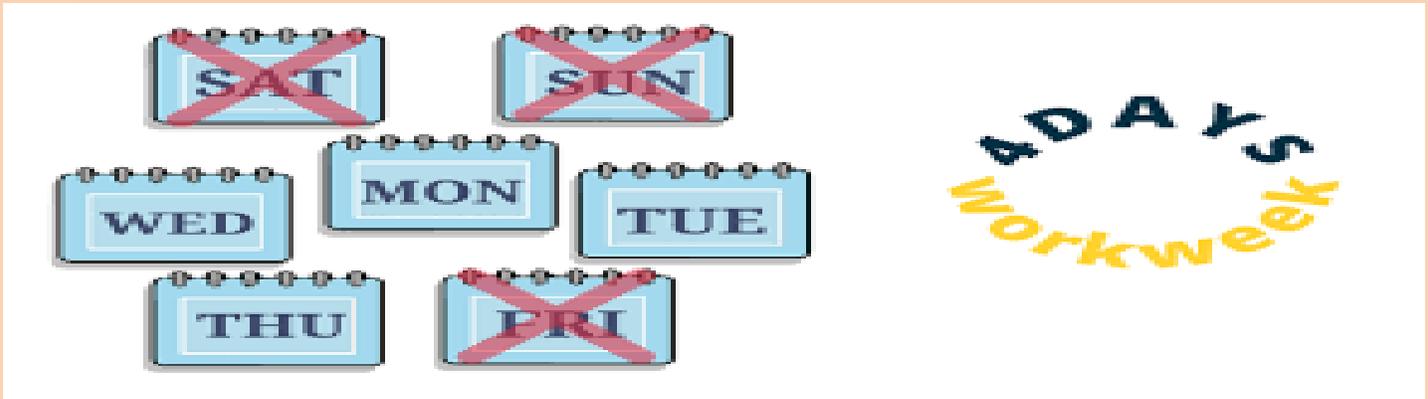
On November 15, 2021, Sri Lanka had temporarily shut its only oil refinery as part of its efforts to manage dwindling foreign exchange reserves. At the end of October, the country's foreign reserves had dropped to \$2.3 billion, down from \$7.5 billion when the current government took control over two years ago.

The island's tourism revenues and remittances have declined, prompting an import restriction on various commodities, including vehicles, spare parts, and spices, which has been in effect since March of last year. International rating agencies have downgraded Sri Lanka's credit worthiness after the country's GDP contracted by an unprecedented 3.6 per cent last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.



## A Four Day Working Week: A Possibility

~Manvi Vohra



In last two years things have changed drastically in the work culture due to the pandemic, where people have shifted from office to working in an online mode from their home. However, these changes continue to grow as government plans on reforming labor codes implementing a four-day work week from next fiscal year. A four-day workweek is, ideally, a 32-hour workweek with no loss in productivity, pay, or benefits. The concept of completing more work in less time in order to increase time off is not new but has received greater consideration under the light of COVID-19. For instance, Ford Motor Company is to be thanked for our current five-day workday rather than six-day workweek. In July 1926, an experiment at a few plants became company policy by September of the same year. Many companies worldwide have implemented a four-day work week system and Japan's government has recommended it as a national policy. Experiments with a four-day workweek in the United States have been taking place since the 1990s.

Soon the employees in India also might be able to enjoy a four-day workweek beginning next year if the new labor regulations are enacted, as opposed to the present five-day workweek. According to a senior government source reported by the PTI news agency, India is set to implement four new labor regulations covering pay, social security, industrial relations, and occupational safety by the following fiscal year beginning in 2022. However, the working hours will increase up to 12 hours making sure 48-hour weekly work is completed. A variety of facets of employment and work culture, in general, may alter as a result of these new standards, including employees' take-home pay, working hours, and the number of weekdays. According to specialists evaluating the proposed labor regulations, the new legislation will significantly alter how employees compute their basic salary and provident fund contributions (PF). Employees' monthly contributions to their PF accounts will grow under the new guidelines, while their monthly in-hand compensation would decrease. The regulations limit allowances to 50% of the salary, implying that half of the salary is basic wages, and provident fund contributions are computed as a percentage of the basic wage, which includes both the basic pay and the dearness allowance (DA). "The Centre has completed the process of finalizing the draft rules on these codes in February 2021. But since labor is a concurrent subject, the Centre wants the states to implement these as well in one go," an official was quoted by PTI. As of now at least 13 states have pre-published draft rules on these laws.

## **It's a Wrap: Winter Session of Parliament 2021**

~Antara Keswani

The 18-day Winter Session of the Parliament (29th November to 22nd December) saw the introduction of 13 Bills. Out of these, 12 were introduced in the Lok Sabha, and 1 in Rajya Sabha. The session concluded a day in advance after both Houses of Parliament were adjourned sine die. The Farm Laws Repeal Bill, 2021 was introduced by the Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Mr Narendra Singh Tomar on the first day of the Winter Session and was passed by both Houses via voice vote without any discussion. The Bill repeals the three farm laws that were passed by the Government in September 2020. The ongoing farmer's protests since November 2020 necessitated the need for the Government to take down the laws and accept the majority of the demands of the farmer groups.

The Lok Sabha also saw the introduction of the Election Laws (Amendment) Bill 2021 by Union Minister of Law and Justice Kiren Rijju. It was passed by voice vote within 20 minutes amid opposition protests, and in Rajya Sabha the following day. The Amendment aims at linking voter ID numbers with Aadhaar to improve voter accessibility and reduce electoral malpractices. Moreover, the Bill seeks to provide four qualifying dates in a year to update the voting rolls, including those who have turned 18.

The Delhi Special Police Establishment (Amendment) Bill, 2021, and Central Vigilance Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which have the provision of extending the terms of the heads of the CBI, ED and CVC up to five years were passed by both houses of the Parliament. The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Amendment) Bill, 2021 which governs activities involving narcotic narcotics and psychotropic substances, such as manufacturing, transporting, and consuming them received Parliament nod. The High Court and Supreme Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 2021 which regulates the salaries and conditions of service of the Judges of High Courts and the Supreme Court of India was also passed.

Paying heed to the opposition's demands, certain bills were sent to parliamentary committees for closer scrutiny. The National Anti-Doping Bill, The Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Bill, the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021, the Chartered Accountants, the Cost and Works Accountants and the Company Secretaries (Amendment) Bill, the Mediation Bill and the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) bill were sent to the standing committees for further scrutiny. An important bill, the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021 increases the legal age of marriage of women from 18 to 21 and seeks to amend the existing laws on the age of marriage of different faiths.

<b>Total number of Bills introduced</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Number of Bills introduced in Lok Sabha</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Number of Bills introduced in Rajya Sabha</b>	<b>01</b>
<b>Number of Bills passed by both Houses</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Number of Bills sent to Standing Committee</b>	<b>04</b>

## **Global Financial Crisis**

*~Aamiya Dhand*

The world seems to be in an 'almost- economic rubble' yet again. The pandemic has not only jeopardized the lives of citizens around the world but also the economies. The world borrowing has gone out of control. Governments worldwide are closer to becoming bankrupt than at any other time in recent history, surpassing even World War II in the fight against Covid-19. From the US to Japan to China, fiscal authorities have spent vast sums to protect their people and economies from the pandemic's terrible toll. At the same time, firms are selling bonds in historic quantities, aided by extraordinary government market support. The global debt has now increased to \$226 trillion, which is 99 per cent of the global GDP. Governments are spending vast sums of money to keep the economies afloat. They ought to provide free immunizations, free food, health, and infrastructure to the citizens. Leading economies like the US are severely indebted. US has the highest level of government debt, almost \$20 trillion, which is more than 106.7% of its GDP. The federal government has spent trillions of dollars to stimulate the economy in response to the pandemic, including stimulus payments for citizens and aid for businesses and state and municipal governments.

Japan's situation is alarming. The country has borrowed more than \$9.08 T which is more than 237.54% of the GDP. It is beset by a growing public debt that is roughly double the size of the country's gross domestic product. However, the government's deteriorating financial situation has only worsened in the last year as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, which has compelled the government to fund massive expenditures for a variety of initiatives. Experts argue that while higher spending is essential owing to the emergency, Japan will need to begin seriously considering how it will deal with its debt once the pandemic has passed. Otherwise, it may face serious consequences.

China may be the 'world's creditor', perhaps it's heavily indebted. China is one of the world's mostdebted major economies, with public and private debt. Worse, its state- owned banks, particularly in the real estate sector, are sitting on mounds of bad debts and non-performing loans. And that's only the tip of the iceberg; there's a mountain of shady debt, off-balance-sheet financing, wealth management products, and local government funding vehicles beneath it all. Overall, China's deficit is far higher than it appears at first glance. It is so large that some analysts believe it is at risk of exploding, causing significant damage to the global economy.

### **Economic Recession – 2007-08**

The last time the world faced a financial crisis was in 2007–2008. It was the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. This "perfect storm" included predatory lending to low-income homebuyers, excessive risk-taking by global financial institutions, and the fall of the US housing bubble. The value of mortgage- backed securities (MBS) tied to American real estate, as well as a complex web of derivatives linked to those MBS, plummeted. Financial institutions worldwide were severely harmed, culminating in the collapse of Lehman Brothers on September 15, 2008, and an international banking crisis that followed. History may have a proclivity to repeat itself. If the financial situation is not stabilized, the world may be forced to face this economic catastrophe yet again.

## **Aadhaar and Voter ID Linkage: A Looming Threat?**

~Antara Keswani



The Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 20th December 2021 by Union Minister of Law and Justice Kiren Rijju and passed by voice vote within 20 minutes amid opposition protests. The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill on 21st December 2021. The Amendment aims at linking voter ID numbers with Aadhaar to improve voter accessibility and reduce electoral malpractices. Calling it a voluntary practice, Kiren Rijju said that the government wants the electoral roll to be genuine and weed out duplicates in voter rolls. The interlinking of Aadhaar and Voter ID numbers have been justified to stop bogus voting in elections and make the voting process more credible. This step would remove the problem of fraudulent voting that is common in elections. Since the Aadhaar Card information is authenticated by biometrics, the issue of duplication will be resolved. Therefore, the linkage would curb the menace of multiple enrolments of the same person in different places, thus cleaning the electoral process.

Moreover, the linkage aims to ensure improved electoral participation. India falls behind considerably in voter participation when compared to other large democracies, and a major reason for this is the staggering numbers of migrant workers - an estimated population of 300 million. The amendment would provide the migrant workers with the right to vote regardless of their location, in order to let them participate in elections in their home states. Therefore, linking the two databases would allow the Election Commission to track migrant workers and improve election participation. The Opposition has criticized the Bill calling it an infringement on the fundamental right to privacy in the absence of Personal Data Protection Law.

The demographic information that is used to get an Aadhaar card can be harnessed by the database and misused for political agenda. Given the reported scope for fraud with Aadhaar, this process could undermine the sanctity of the voter roll. The disenfranchisement of citizens is another concern pointed out by the Opposition. Multiple studies by multilateral organizations such as the World Bank have shown that having a single form of identification actually disenfranchises citizens and removes them from the welfare and electoral system. Considering many people have had trouble in establishing their identity for collecting food rations or mid-day meals using Aadhaar, it could be an issue for voting as well, thus undermining the institution of democracy itself.

## **Ban on diesel cars: A step towards lost revenue and sustainable environment**

*~Aakarshan Singh*

The Supreme Court's prohibition on the registration of new diesel cars, which went into effect on Wednesday morning, has already sparked an extensive discussion on two fronts: how awful diesel is, and why should automobiles bear the brunt of the responsibility for diesel's impact on Delhi's air quality. In 2013-14, Delhi burned 11.32 metric tons of fuel, 39.6 per cent greater than the 8.11 metric tons consumed just four years before. Policy experts and scientists, notably the Supreme Court-appointed EPCA, had consistently stated that the increase in diesel usage from 2007-08 reduced the advantages obtained in Delhi's air quality when public transportation was switched to CNG. In the late 1990s, diesel-powered cars accounted for barely 4% of total automobile sales in Delhi, according to EPCA data from 2007, with the figure rising to 24% in 2006. The rationale for this was the rapidly shrinking price differential between CNG and diesel.

In June 2010, a gallon of diesel cost Rs 40.10, while a kilogram of CNG cost Rs 27.50. Today, a litre of petrol costs Rs 95.26 and a kilogram of CNG costs Rs 67.55. In a report last year, the EPCA informed the SC, in 2002-03, CNG was around 46.71 percent cheaper than diesel. As diesel prices rose between 2004 and 2009, the disparity grew to more than 50%. In December 2013, the pricing disparity (had) dropped to 7.35 per cent, according to the study. High CNG costs harm public transportation and undermine (the) clean fuel programme, it went on to say. The proposal was denied in March 2008, citing the government's inability to restrict cars from using a specific type of gasoline.

Private car ownership has been a typical phenomenon in today's context of rising consumer convenience. In this sense, it is critical not to overlook the environmental consequences of driving personal automobiles (like exhaust emission of pollutants from vehicles and urban air pollution). The expenses of environmental consequences connected with vehicle emissions in terms of sickness and death due to air pollution are borne by society. Governments are offering different

incentives to people to purchase electric vehicles to lessen the environmental effect of motor vehicles (EVs). EVs are more environmentally friendly than fossil fuel-powered cars (FFVs). EVs are more expensive than FFVs, which typically influences consumers' decisions favoring FFVs. Even though an EV's operating expenses are lower during its lifespan when compared to FFVs with comparable amenities, buyers frequently choose FFVs over EVs owing to the initial price differential. By banning diesel cars older than 15 years, we are looking towards a rise in the "lost revenue" and a better environment; however, the goal should be to reduce the disparity between the two.



## Indo-Afghan Talks

~*Manvi Vohra*

On August 15, Kabul the capital of Afghanistan was taken over by the Taliban. This took place after the withdrawal of the United States from the Taliban after a two-decade-long war. Since then, Afghans are being treated brutally, trying to save themselves from an authoritarian regime. Afghanistan has been in a constant state of war, fighting Russia, the US, and now the Taliban. This very issue scares India and other Central Asian countries, making them wonder whether issues in Afghanistan might lead to set off a domino effect. India's policy towards Afghanistan has been anti-Taliban since the removal of the group from power in 2001. "This is why the Narendra Modi government's decision to formally reach out to the Taliban was such a game-changer," Kugelman says. "And it ended up becoming more important than India could have imagined, given the Taliban's rapid rise to power."

On 19 December, India, and Central Asian Countries pushed for a planned and unified action against terror groups, trying to save the land of Afghanistan and provide aid to Afghans. S Jaishankar set the stage for discussions, stating that India and Central Asian Countries have the same objectives in Afghanistan. Some of these objectives include the formation of an inclusive government, fighting against terror, and providing Afghans with humanitarian aid. India's statement on terrorism in Afghanistan speaks a lot about their concerns regarding Pakistan.

New Delhi has sent out three powerful messages by hosting the Third Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan this week, chaired by NSA Ajit Doval: one, that it wants to remain an essential and committed player in the future of Afghanistan; second, that with the departure of US-NATO troops, the optimal situation to the predicament is through convergence in Afghanistan's extended vicinity, including Russia; and third, that the Afghan humanitarian catastrophe should be the region's primary focal point.

Despite the LAC deadlock and significant differences with the Imran Khan administration over Kashmir and cross-border extremism, it was the last message that prompted New Delhi to summon the NSAs from China and Pakistan. Beijing and Islamabad have made it obvious that they do not plan to assist India in its Afghan involvement by denying the invitation, as evidenced by the Khan government's flippancy. While the agreement on the Delhi Declaration is commendable, it does not cover all the gaps between India as well as the other countries in terms of their significantly more robust involvement with Kabul. Turkmenistan, for example, sent a ministerial mission to the Taliban to discuss connection, while Uzbekistan afforded the Taliban Deputy Prime Minister full protocol and discussed trade, transit, and the development of a railway line. Russia and Iran still have embassies in Kabul, and a "Troika-plus" meeting between the US, China, Russia, and Pakistan is currently happening this week in Islamabad with the Taliban Foreign Minister. New Delhi must now decide how far it wants to go in its involvement with Afghanistan, as "normalization" of ties with the Taliban regime grows.

## Vienna Talks

~Akanksha Singh

The signatories of the now almost defunct Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), signed in 2015, have once again gathered in Vienna to try to revive the deal. The talks began in early April this year and have now completed seven rounds of talk. The talks aim to create a roadmap to build a synchronized return of both Iran and US back into compliance with the 2015 deal. The JCPOA was signed by USA, China, France, Germany, Russia, Britain, the European Union and Iran. Through this, Iran had pledged to reduce its nuclear activities and agreed for them to be monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency in exchange for relief from sanctions which were in force against the country at the time.

However, with Trump vehemently opposed to the agreement, he decided to withdraw from it in 2018, leaving the rest of the signatories in a fix. Europe tried multiple times to keep the deal alive but with the increasingly strict American sanctions the attempts didn't end in any sort of fruition.

The re-imposition of sanctions on Iran and it also losing its customers for oil, its economy saw a steep plunge. It tried to pressurize the other signatories of the JCPOA to withdraw sanctions. However, with no relief in sight, it decided to retaliate by restarting uranium enrichment at a level even higher than it had achieved before the JCPOA talks.

It also began making uranium metal which is necessary for building a warhead which was banned under the agreement. To further put pressure on the West to look for a resolution, it increased its support to allies in the Middle East, which include many groups that the West categorically regards as terrorist groups.

With Biden coming to power, there were hopes for revival of the JCPOA. He has also expressed his inclination to resume talks since taking over the US Presidency. However, Iran wants the US to comply with the agreement, that

is remove sanctions first, before it can resume talks with the country. The US in turn wants Iran to make the first move and scale back its activities. Thus, the two nations still seem to be at an impasse. Iran refused to talk directly with the US during the current Vienna talks and hence, is in contact with the country indirectly while the other signatories have a more direct role in the talks.

A major impediment to the progress in talks seemed to be the change in Iranian leadership from the moderate Hassan Rouhani to the more hardline and anti-west Ebrahim Raisi. This led to a 5-month hiatus in the talks. However, the parties finally agreed to meet again and try to find a solution to the crisis. The seventh round, the latest one, ended last week with seemingly considerable progress for Iran.

The representative for the country in the talks elaborated on the two new agreed upon texts, with one about lifting sanctions and the other on Iran's nuclear activities. Even so, the other parties are still skeptical about the progress in the talks, with all of them looking forward to the eight rounds, purported to begin soon.

Iran has, however, shown considerable willingness to accommodate the Western interests by agreeing to the replacement of cameras in its highly contested centrifuge parts manufacturing workshop by the IAEA. These will replace the previously damaged or destroyed cameras which were believed to have been a sabotage attack that Iran blamed on Israel. The US seems to not have much hope in the successful completion of the Vienna talks, especially given its recent meeting with Israel Prime Minister to discuss possible actions to be taken in case diplomacy with Iran fails.

Among the proposed solutions, possible military exercises to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities have also been discussed in Washington. While the West has often vacillated on its sanctions policy on Iran, the latter has come out and officially stated its commitment to never seeking a nuclear weapon. The end results of the talks are still extremely ambiguous with both sides appearing to wait for the next round. It is hoped that the parties can conclude the talks with a return to the JCPOA-like agreement, with both sides willing to negotiate and compromise.

## Climate Change: An Inevitable Doom?

~Aakarshan Singh



"Friends of the Earth warn that we have wasted valuable time in the race to control climate change." "The UN Secretary-General expresses dissatisfaction with the climate change conference's indecisive conclusion." "The South accuses the North of failing to uphold its climate change pledges." "The agreement was inadequate; even if we achieve each target, we will fall short of our objectives." These don't reply to the recent climate summit in Glasgow, COP26. These are some headlines from COP summits in Buenos Aires in 1998, The Hague in 2000, Lima in 2014, and Paris in 2015. Greta Thunberg, an activist, shared their sentiments about Glasgow: "It is no secret that COP26 was a colossal disaster." It should be self-evident that we cannot address the issue using the same tactics that brought us into it in the first place. Why is it that we are still unable to enact the essential changes despite broad agreement on the need to move quickly to safeguard human life on planet?

Every one of the 26 climate change conferences convened over the last 26 years has produced unsatisfactory outcomes. Yes, industrialized nations established objectives to cut emissions in Kyoto in 2005, and in Paris in 2015, they promised to do all it takes to limit the average temperature from increasing more than 1.5 degrees Celsius. However, the majority of the pledges have not been followed. In reality, things are becoming worse, not better: carbon emissions have climbed by 60% since the first meeting.

As a result of this discouraging track record, Glasgow's expectations were at an all-time low. Nonetheless, the meeting resulted in three significant decisions: the United States announced that it would double its climate change budget; China pledged to stop building coal-fired power plants in other countries, and more than 100 countries committed to reducing methane gas emissions by 30 per cent by 2030.

However, as UN Secretary-General António Guterres noted, the Glasgow summit was "an important but insufficient step" that "reflects the world's interests, conflicts, and level of political will." Why is there such a lack of action in the face of such a clear threat? One key element is a lack of political will, caused by the disapproval of policies that raise the cost of electricity and other items.

Another challenge is determining whether nations should begin a tight diet that reduces their consumption of hydrocarbons, while others should keep or even expand theirs. And, of course, there's the thorny question of which countries should pay the massive expenditures required to minimise the effects of climate change and adapt to the new reality.

The list of challenges is lengthy and daunting. These limitations can be solved only through massive worldwide production of "public goods." These are objects that may be eaten by any person or entity, even if they did not contribute to their production or use. A typical example is a lighthouse, which aids ships in navigating securely at night. Ships that did not pay for their construction profit just like the rest. Another feature of a public good is that many individuals may consume it. Lowering CO2 emissions is a typical example of a global public benefit, probably the most desperately needed public good right now. This is the crucial issue confronting humanity in its fight to control climate change because most of the

expenditures required to achieve the goal will have to come from taxpayers in affluent nations. Will the most developed countries can channel their financial resources into the construction of public goods worldwide – not only in their territories – to maintain a climate that supports human existence as we know it? The answer to that question determines the fate of society as we know it.

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