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# GLOBAL UP-TO-DATE

A  Publication

The world around us is changing rapidly. Wars, new turn in global politics, human rights issues are occurring every day, posing new challenges and concerns. Global Up-to-Date is an initiative by Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) which will work as a hub for explaining the contemporary global issues.

The regular briefs will focus and explain the issues related to International Politics, Economy, Security, Human Rights, and Development. There will be a monthly printed version newsletter containing briefs of all the contemporary global important issues. The online version contains regular updates of the pressing issues along with the PDF version of the newsletter.

## Contributors

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**Trapa Sarker**

Research Intern  
Centre for Governance Studies



**Aong Cha Ching Marma**

Research Assistant  
Centre for Governance Studies



**Depanjali Roy**

Chief of Staff  
Centre for Governance Studies



**Kazi Rhid**

Content Strategy Coordinator  
Centre for Governance Studies

### Assistant Editor, Global Up-To-Date

**Roman Uddin**

Research Associate and Youth Outreach Program Coordinator  
Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)



# U.S.-China tie: 45 years of 'Tug of War'

Trapa Sarker



Promising more cooperation and liability in the new year, the U.S.-China commemorated a historic 45 years of diplomatic relationship in January 2024. Deng Xiaoping and Jimmy Carter were the two leaders who succeeded in normalizing the ideologically polarized country's tangled relationship. After passing lots of peaks and valleys in the past, the U.S.-China relationship now stands in a landscape where only adherence to the mutual respect doctrine can balance their volatile coexistence. Despite having poles apart national ideologies from the very start, these two greatest global powers kick-started their official diplomatic engagement in the year 1979. The progress can be figured out from the astonishing fact that today their bilateral trade stands at \$760bn in comparison to \$2.5bn in 1979. But the path was not a smooth one.

Their contest started in 1949 when America backed the Chiang's Taiwan exiled Chinese Nationalist Government over Mao Zedong's Communist government. Later on, both enemies fought the oppositewhile extending support to respective ally groups during the 'Korean War'. Further deterioration occurred involving deployment at the 'Taiwan Strait' when the U.S. directlythreatened nuclear war on China in 1955. But their relationship got momentum with China's successful nuclear test in 1964, amid 'The Vietnam crisis'. Gradually, both countries then started making efforts to normalize long-strained differences through diplomatic initiatives. Among these,the famous 'Ping-Pong diplomacy', Presidential visits, full diplomatic recognition, and trade agreements are the most significant ones.Through expanding its military, economic, and naval power in a short period, China has emerged as one of the global powerhouses. China's entry into the World Trade Organization dismissed trade barriers between both countries in the sense that it allowed large amounts of foreign investment, job creation, and business enhancement.In 2019, a trade war with its rival China has severely hampered the US economy.

Research says, about 62%of Americans areuneasy about China's robust diplomatic relationship with Russia whereas the highest concern of 81% involves China's powerful economic progress being a threat to America's top position. Competition is intensifying in technological innovation which means more influence in international politics through military and monetary strength. In the race of superiority rivalry, China presently has the upper hand in global mineral supply chains, and on the other hand, the U.S. is the dominator in the semiconductor field. To encounter China's dominance, America took roots of subsidies, and tax credit beneficiaries for its domestic automakers as well as imposed sanctions on China. China is putting efforts into 'Data weaponization' by restricting data flow beyond borders for a more secure digital economy.

Nevertheless, rigidity still flows over China's authority on the South China Sea, minority abuse, and Taiwan-like issues. Of late, the profound built-in tension shot up freshly when China sanctioned defense-related companies of the USA, in response to retaliate America's \$300 million arms sales deal to Taiwan which is viewed as a sovereignty breach. Given the expected colossal missile buildup in the Indo-Pacific region by 2030, it may not be an overstatement that the dynamics of the USA and China relationship are bound to come under unavoidable war situations at any time. Even the staff-level 'Military-to-Military Dialogue' termed as an invaluable foreign diplomacy tool for diminishing conflicting concerns has been halted since 2021 due to the Taiwan crisis between these two countries. Megaproject 'Belt and Road Initiative' projecting close ties of China in the Middle East. China's increased strategic cooperative ties with like-minded Russia, and North Korea are troubling USA in terms of maintaining its existing geopolitical hegemony. Moreover, regular military operations, and maritime patrolling backed by the USA happened throughout 2023 at the South China Sea. Multilateral security agreements between USA, Japan, Philippines, Australia, and Vietnam regarding the South China Sea territory dispute have threatened China's interests.

Channeling this trajectory of differences in more innovative and inclusive ways, these so-called systematic rivals can utilize advancement on various fronts. To sail off this cooperation, China has called for restarting the US-China Science and Technology agreement, also increasing direct flight numbers between both countries. Initiatives of 'Military-to-Military Dialogue', 'Joint Anti-Narcotics group', and sending giant pandas as a 'symbol of friendship' opened the door to revive cooperation and trust at the San Francisco Summit between the two country's presidents held in November. They have also reached consent to unite on global crises like climate change, artificial intelligence, and counter-narcotics areas. On the Taiwan issue, China is openly asking for America's cooperation by not interfering in its domestic matters, refraining from selling arms to Taiwan, and supporting its independence. Whether this call for 'Friendship' will succeed or not, only time will say.

## Fires in Baluchistan: Recent Wave of Conflict Between Iran and Pakistan

*Aong Cha Ching Marma*



A surprising military strike by Iran against its powerful neighbor Pakistan on January 16, 2024, seemed to startle the whole world and raised questions about the reason behind this sudden action. Iran claimed a missile strike on two hidden bases of the anti-Iran insurgent group Jaish al-Adl (Army of Justice), located in Pakistan's Baluchistan province. In response to this attack, Pakistan retaliated against Iran in less than two days, striking missiles and sending fighter jets to Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province, asserting to target the hideouts of anti-Pakistan ethno-nationalist insurgents.

Iran firmly stated that the strike aimed to prevent further attacks by Jaish al-Adl, following the terrorist attack in the town of Rask, Sistan-Baluchistan province, on December 15, 2023. Jaish al-Adl claimed responsibility for the Rask attack, in which 12 Iranian police officers were killed and 7 others injured. Additionally, a similar event occurred in Sistan-Baluchistan province in July 2023, resulting in the death of 4 police officers. The attack on Pakistan coincided with recent strikes in Iraq and Syria by the Iranian military.

Pakistan's caretaker prime minister, Anwaar Ul Haq Kakar, who was attending the annual meeting of the World Trade Forum (WTF), promptly returned to his country after the sudden strike by Iran. The Pakistani leadership was confounded by this unexpected attack, which constituted a major violation of Pakistan's sovereignty. In line with the need to demonstrate Pakistan's military deterrence, the country was compelled to make a retaliatory attack against Iran. The retaliatory strike was also crucial to uphold the reputation of Pakistan's powerful army chief, Gen. Asim Munir, known for firmness both inside and outside the country.

The region of Baluchistan, known for its distinctive cultural and historical identity, is presently divided among three countries: Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. Baluchistan, dominated by the Sunni majority Baloch people, is rich in natural resources. In Pakistan's Baluchistan province alone, over US \$1 trillion worth of resources, such as gold, copper, black pearls, oil, valuable stones, coal, chromite, and natural gas, have been discovered. Moreover, the Baluchistan region is geographically vital for both Iran and Pakistan, housing two major ports, Gwadar Port in Pakistan and Chabahar Port in Iran, which are economically and militarily significant for both countries.

Despite the availability of resources and geo-strategic significance, the Baloch people remain one of the poorest ethnic groups in South Asia. In Sistan-Baluchistan province, over 80 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, while Iran's national average is 28 percent. Similarly, in Pakistan, over 65 percent of the Baloch ethnic group lives below the poverty standard.

Issues related to wealth deprivation, lower political representation, and lack of autonomy for the Baloch people have been major factors behind tension in this region, both domestically and externally. These reasons have led to the formation of several insurgent groups, most of which demand the establishment of a sovereign country called "Baluchistan."

One such insurgent group is Jaish-I-Adil, formed in 2012. While several insurgent groups used to receive funding from Gulf countries before, the funding has decreased or stopped due to a lack of stake in this region. However, Iran asserts that Jaish-I-Adil is currently funded by Israel. Additionally, the support of the Pakistani military to this insurgent group remains suspicious.

The relationship between Iran and Pakistan has never been consistently friendly or hostile. Bilateral trade between the two countries amounts to \$2 billion, with most trade occurring in the Baluchistan region. Furthermore, the Iran-Pakistan pipeline, also known as the peace pipeline, is under construction to deliver gas not only to Pakistan but also to India.

Notably, Pakistan is not in good terms with Iran due to Iran's close relationship with India. Conversely, Iran is dissatisfied that Pakistan is a close ally of its rival, the United States. Iran has been able to deter against Israel and United States through its supporting militia group collectively called the Axis of Resistance (including Lebanon's Hezbollah, Yemen's Houthis, Gaza's Hamas, etc.) and its strong proxy army. However, Iran is also concerned that this deterrence may falter due to Israel's support for the Jaish-I-Adil insurgent group and the close relationship between Pakistan and United States.

Both countries are making efforts to maintain a good relationship with each other after the mutual attacks. Among other reasons, such as nearing national elections in both countries, economic dependency, and ongoing domestic issues, play a significant role in the normalization of their relations. China has also played a mediator role to de-escalate tensions between these neighboring countries.

In the face of the escalating tensions between Iran and Pakistan, the complex terrain of Balochistan becomes a pivotal battleground, not only for the involved nations but for the broader stability of the Middle East. The resource-rich yet economically marginalized region, compounded by ethnic disparities and the rise of insurgent groups, paints a challenging backdrop for diplomatic resolution. As China steps in to mediate, the global community watches with bated breath, recognizing that the unfolding events in Baluchistan have the potential to reshape geopolitical dynamics and influence the course of regional conflicts. The resilient spirit of the Baloch people, amidst these tumultuous circumstances, underscores the need for a nuanced approach that addresses both historical grievances and contemporary challenges in order to foster lasting peace in this critical crossroads.

## Ballot Waves: Taiwan's Political Shift and Changing Status Quo with China

*Depanjali Roy*



There were a lot of speculations about the China- Taiwan tension regarding the Taiwan election held on 13th January. The international community was champing at the bit to see the outcome of the election, as there was a political party the Kuomintang, or KMT who's political agenda swayed by China. The politicians of KMT had good relations with Chinese high officials about trade and many more. Though those talks will not stand anywhere as Lai Ching-te of Democratic Progressive Party, or DPP won the election and attained as the president of Taiwan. After getting the result of the election, first Lai Ching-te faced the international media, then he went to the stage to deliver his victory speech to the people of Taiwan. It shows how bold and confident he was with his victory.

Taiwan recognized themselves as Republic of China (ROC) after Chiang Kai-shek was defeated by the communist party in the civil war and fled to the "this" island. Initially the Republic of China was considered as the government of China and also given a seat in the UN. Soon it changed and the People's Republic of China got the status of the original government of China. However, the USA always supported Taiwan and maintained close ties providing military support and trade. Till now, China did not appreciate the US involvement with Taiwan as they think the USA is intervening in their internal matters. It is only bound to maintain cultural relations. Not only the USA, China criticizes any countries involvement with Taiwan as they think Taiwan is a part of the communist country, it's the against the "One China Policy"

Regarding the Taiwan election, though Lai Ching-te from the DPP won, however they have to face difficulty forming the legislative, which is called Legislative Yuan. In the previous presidential and parliamentary election in 2016 and 2020 won by Tsai Ing-wen from DPP. In 2016 she got 56.1 percent of the vote and also got majority seats in the parliament, which is 68 seats, with authority of all the major law-making decisions. Tsai Ing-wen again won in 2020 with more than 57 percent of the vote. But in the year 2024 the scenario is different as DPP only won in the presidential election but was incapable of winning majority legislative seats. However, among 113 seats 52 seats were won by Kuomintang, or KMT, which is a seat extra than DPP. On the other hand, Taiwan's People's Party (TPP) won 8 seats and positioned themselves as "game-changers". Therefore, it will be formidable for Lai Ching-te to implement all the policies regarding the economy and law making. Here it is significant to mention that both TPP and KMT are eager to form a coalition to get the upper-hand in the legislative decision making and both of the parties have close ties with China. KMT was formed by the people who fled from China after being defeated in the Civil War in 1947 and pursue reunification with China but according to them they are not "pro-China", same goes for TPP as well. Here we can assume the decision making will be tough when the inauguration of the president will be held in May.

On the other hand, Europe, Japan, Australia and the Philippines, not to forget the USA congratulated Lai Ching-te for the achievement. The EU welcomed Taiwan as they hold up their democracy and also showed concern on the tension developing on Taiwan Strait on the change of status quo. Japan's de facto ambassador to Taiwan, Kazuyuki Katayama of the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association, said "Taiwan's democracy is strong and vibrant" and Japan will continue to work with Taiwan's current and next governments and all stakeholders in Taiwan to develop friendly ties between Taiwan and Japan and maintain peace and stability in the region." These gestures of the world leaders are seen by China as an intervention and the "Red Dragon " country conveyed a message to stay away from internal matters. China summoned the Philippines ambassador after President Ferdinand Marcos Jr congratulated Taiwan's new elected president. According to China, it was a silly move by the Philippines and against the One China Policy from their side. To calm down the situation, the Philippines foreign ministry stated that they adhere to the One-China policy and the gesture by the president holds no grievance against China. In the same way China also showed deep dissatisfaction towards Japan's move to congratulate Taiwan. Though Japan doesn't share diplomatic relations with Taiwan, it has an alliance with the USA, and Taiwan is always backed up by them. This is why, Japanese Foreign Minister stated "The Government of Japan will work toward further deepening cooperation and exchanges between Japan and Taiwan."

Lastly, China is not taking it lightly if any other countries interfere with the status quo of China-Taiwan. China knew that protests in 2019, protests in Hong Kong was the reason why KMT lost the election of Taiwan in 2020. As for now, it's been a drastic change in Taiwanese people. The KMT got majority seats in the Legislative Yuan. It's stated that reunification with China is not in a few people's minds but it's higher. So, there is a strong possibility that, coalition of KMT and TPP will give, with the influence of China, a tough time to the DPP in policy making cases. Many analysts predicted that, though China is against Lai Ching-te's policy, The possibility of war between these two countries is unlikely, as China can't afford the economic loss caused by it. Other than that, the USA backing up Taiwan will make the brawl complex and nasty. News of visits of many US officials and lawmakers in upcoming weeks, Nauru breaking ties with Taiwan and establishing relations with Beijing added fuel to the fire. Ultimately the status quo will change the dynamics of the region focusing on the inauguration of the president in May.

# Warming Trends and Climate Crisis

*Kazi Rhid*



The effects of climate change have been having its strangest effect on Bangladesh this winter, usually if we go back a decade, the weather pattern was at the end of October slight chills would be felt in the breeze. In late November the chilly winds would get stronger by the second week of December you would need to wear sweaters or winter clothing, which meant full fledged winter. In recent years this pattern has taken a turn for warming, for the past five years or so we have been getting just a week or two of proper winter. But this year was completely different, the temperature was so high through December most households were turning on their ceiling fans, suddenly at the start of the new year a cold wave has been sweeping through the country that is going on for an entire month. The sudden cold has been a reason for many respiratory illnesses all over the country, and the deteriorating air quality has not been helping.

The most concerning among the weather patterns in the past few years has been the El Niño and La Niña - These are natural climate phenomena that alter global weather patterns by changing the surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean. El Niño events tend to increase global temperatures and cause wetter weather in some regions and drier weather in others. La Niña events have the opposite effects. Both phenomena also influence the frequency and intensity of tropical storms in different ocean basins. The extreme weather events worsened by El Niño and La Niña affect food, infrastructure and energy systems around the globe. El Niño events reduce fish stocks, cause droughts and floods, and increase CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from wildfires and reduced plant growth. El Niño and La Niña episodes usually happen every two to seven years, and vary in strength and duration. Scientists are not sure how climate change will affect these events in the future.

The Amazon rain forest has been facing record levels of droughts in recent years as a part of the El Nino weather pattern. A World Weather Attribution group study found that climate change made the extreme drought 30 times more likely than in a world without human-induced warming. The study used computer simulations paired with weather data to compare two scenarios: one with and one without climate change. If deforestation and carbon emissions continue at the current pace, the rainforest could soon reach a point of no return, where it would rapidly and irreversibly die back and become a source of carbon dioxide emissions. Though there are reasons for hope, such as the reduction of deforestation in 2023 and the pledge by the Brazilian president to halt it by 2030.

There is a certain ominous feeling that creeps up whenever we think of the climate crisis and the responses of the world leaders through various conferences and summits. Mukhtar Babayev, a former oil executive and current environment minister of Azerbaijan, has been selected as the president-designate of the COP29 summit in Baku next year. "There's a sense of déjà vu setting in - we now have a former oil executive from an authoritarian petrostate in charge of the world's response to the crisis that fossil fuel firms created," said Alice Harrison from Global Witness. Before Babayev Sultan al-Jaber of the UAE was also an oil executive who stayed on-board as head of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company whilst chairing COP28. The suspicion of not having a fair game in terms of transitioning from fossil fuels could be seen in a skeptical manner given the circumstances.

The latest climate stripes image shows the change in average annual global temperatures since 1850, needs a new color to illustrate the record-breaking heat of 2023. Prof Ed Hawkins, the creator of the climate stripes image, says that 2023 was so hot that the current scale of red and blue colors will not tell the full story. He says the need for a new color was inevitable, but the margin by which the record broke in 2023 was unexpected. Climate stripes spark conversations and actions the climate stripes have been used to raise awareness and inspire action on climate change. Prof Hawkins says that the climate stripes are a means of communication to increase awareness and conversation, but it is now time to take action for these issues. "We already have many of the solutions we need. We now need bold, transformative change across all parts of society to make our planet's climate safer for current and future generations" he said.