

GLOBAL UP-TO-DATE

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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.



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Biden's Visit to Ukraine: Significance and Consequences

Mahbubur Rahman

On Monday, February 20, 2023, four days before the one-year anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, US President Joe Biden made an unannounced visit in Kyiv on route to Poland. Monday's journey to Ukraine was the first since February 24, 2022, when Russian President Vladimir Putin sent his soldiers into the neighboring country. This is a historic first for the United States, as no previous president has ever visited a conflict zone in which American troops are not actively engaged. In the past, when presidents visited combat zones like Iraq and Afghanistan, they were accompanied by large military contingents. To reiterate the United States' unflinching support for Ukraine's democracy, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, as Biden put it, was the primary purpose of his trip. But this trip also benefited him to hold a stronger position in US politics, as it shut down his critics who were pointing him out as old and weak.



Biden to Ukrain

Source-USA Today

Without providing details, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan told the media that the United States had informed Russia about President Biden's planned trip to Ukraine's capital of Kyiv before he left Washington "for deconfliction purposes" to prevent a miscalculation that could lead to a direct conflict between the two nuclear-armed countries.

Even more so after several of his European peers took long train rides to meet with President Zelensky in Kyiv, Biden had been eager to visit Ukraine for months. To show their support, world leaders like French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, and former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson have all visited the country.

The unexpected visit made a few favorable changes to the war's situation. The United States has promised to give the Ukrainian military an additional \$500 million in the form of artillery shells, anti-armor equipment, and air-surveillance radars. In addition, Biden pledged to impose more sanctions on Russia. Japan has promised Ukraine extra financial support of \$5.5 billion after news of Biden's trip became public. On the day of the the official one-year anniversary of the invasion, the Japan also announced that it will organize a virtual meeting for G7 leaders and Zelensky.

A representative for the German government also hailed Biden's trip during a press conference. German Secretary of State Steffen Hebestreit referred to the move as a "positive signal," but declined additional comment. Likewise, Turkey said it would stop shipping goods to Russia that could be used to support the country's military. Washington cautioned Ankara about the sale of chemicals, microchips, and other items, according to the country's foreign minister, Mevlüt avuşolu.

The next day, while addressing a massive crowd in Warsaw, Poland, President Joe Biden framed the conflict as an ideological struggle between democracies and authoritarian regimes. Russian President Vladimir Putin gave a speech a few hours earlier in Moscow. Among his justification of Russia's invasion of Ukraine with some revisionist history and his emphasis on the large quantity of weaponry the West has handed Ukraine, he also announced the withdrawal from a crucial arms control deal with the United States. This is a frightening sign that the future of the globe is at stake in this conflict, not just Ukraine. The prospect of a nuclear war is always present in the background.

In private to the press, American officials have expressed optimism that the enormous influx of hardware to Ukraine (including modern vehicles, longer-range missiles, and Patriot air defense systems) will help Ukraine succeed on the battlefield and strengthen Zelensky's hand in negotiations to end the war.

The United States has consistently refused to clarify what a solution may look like beyond saying it will be up to Zelensky to decide, and it is therefore unclear what parameters Zelensky could be willing to accept in any peace negotiations.

The Adani Group Controversy: Implications for India, Bangladesh and the Credibility of the Corporate Sector

Roman Uddin

The Adani Group, one of India's largest conglomerates, has been making headlines recently due to allegations of stock price manipulation, accounting fraud, and tax evasion. These allegations, made by activist investor group Hindenburg, have raised concerns about the health of the Indian economy and the credibility of the country's corporate sector. However, the Adani Group controversy has wider implications beyond just India. The Group denied the allegations and said it is considering legal action against Hindenburg.



The Adani Group has significant interests in energy, infrastructure, and logistics, among other sectors, and its operations span across India and several other countries, including Bangladesh. The Adani Group's dealings with Bangladesh have become controversial, with experts alleging that the agreement between Adani Power and Bangladesh is the most expensive and lopsided contract, enabling Adani Power to make a significant profit in every phase, from coal purchase to electricity export.

According to the allegations, Adani Power will save over \$1 billion on the Clean Energy Cess (a form of carbon tax) over the 25 years of the contract by becoming a Special Economic Zone. Additionally, Bangladesh is liable to pay roughly \$450 million a year in capacity charges, even if it doesn't buy electricity from Adani for any reason. The agreement's unique design allows Adani to save costs but charge Bangladesh the same amount, thus raking in more profits.

The allegations against the Adani Group have significant implications for the Indian economy, the credibility of the country's corporate sector, and the future of India's state institutions. The involvement of India's largest bank, State Bank of India (SBI), and its largest insurance company, Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), in the financing of the Adani Group has raised concerns over the potential risks to the institution's financial stability and the savings of millions of Indians. As the conglomerate's shares plummeted in the aftermath of the Hindenburg Research report, some experts have expressed the belief that the Adani Group is "too big to fail" in India, with the country's economic future inextricably linked to the success of this behemoth.

The Adani Group has denied the fraud allegations and described the report as "not merely an unwarranted attack on any specific company but a calculated attack on India, the independence, integrity and quality of Indian institutions, and the growth story and ambition of India." The group has also tried to defend itself by bringing up the issue of nationalism, similar to the ruling party, BJP's tactic of bringing Hinduism into politics. Prime Minister Modi also mentions nationalism and western propaganda to defend himself against the BBC documentary about him. Asked about that film, the spokesperson of India's external affairs ministry, Arindam Bagchi, said, "a continuing colonial mindset is blatantly visible."

This attempt to shift the focus from the allegations to nationalism is concerning as it indicates that the Adani Group may not be willing to address the allegations seriously. It also raises questions about the role of state institutions in investigating claims against influential corporations in the future. If corporations can use nationalism as a shield against allegations of wrongdoing, it could have severe consequences for the credibility of the country's institutions and the rule of law.

The controversy surrounding the Adani Group's dealings with Bangladesh raises serious concerns about the impact of large corporations on the economies of developing countries. It is critical that appropriate action is taken to investigate these allegations and protect the interests of all stakeholders involved. The Adani Group's attempt to defend itself by bringing up the issue of nationalism is concerning and needs to be addressed. The Indian government must uphold the rule of law, and state institutions must impartially investigate the allegations against the Adani Group. Additionally, the Bangladesh government must protect its interests and ensure that powerful corporations like the Adani Group do not take advantage of it.

Bomb Blast in Peshwar: Pakistan's Approach to Afghan Taliban

Shurat Rana Rushmi

After a string of attacks on Pakistan's security forces, including a suicide bombing in a Peshawar mosque on 30 January 2023 that killed over 100 people, Pakistan has reached out to Afghan Taliban leader Haibuttallah Akhundzada for help in bringing the proscribed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), also known as the Pakistani Taliban, under control. On February 22, 2023, Pakistani Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Chief Lt. General Nadeem Anjum, Foreign Affairs Secretary Asad Majid, and Special Envoy for Afghanistan Muhammad Sadiq landed in Kabul to meet with Taliban officials. During the meeting in Peshawar, the civil and military leadership held the outlawed TTP accountable for the suicide bombing and decided to raise the issue with the interim Afghan government at the highest level, sending a clear message that Pakistan would no longer tolerate cross-border terrorism. The meeting concluded that the TTP carried out the attack, but they did not disclose it out of fear of retaliation from the Afghan Taliban. The TTP is allied with the Afghan Taliban, but the two groups maintain separate structures.



Pakistan Bomb Attack

Source-FILE

During its two-decade conflict with U.S.-led NATO forces, Pakistan supplied the Afghan Taliban with personnel and supplies in order to gain 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan and use it against its archrival India. After the United States and NATO withdrew from Afghanistan in August 2021, the Afghan Taliban took Kabul in August 2021. As a result of the Afghan Taliban's refusal to act against the TTP, relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan quickly deteriorated. Pakistan had hoped that the Afghan Taliban, once in control, would eject TTP agents from their territory to end the use of Afghan territory against Pakistan, but they have evidently failed to do so. After the Taliban takeover, Pakistan has permitted seriously ill or injured Afghans to enter the country for medical treatment, although it does not recognize Afghanistan's Taliban administration.

Most of the Taliban's senior leaders were educated in Pakistan's religious madrassas, hence Pakistan has an unavoidable impact on the Taliban. But, as great as Pakistan's influence over the Taliban is, so too are the Taliban's ties to the TTP. Due to their shared Pashtun nationalism and ideology, the TTP and Taliban are comparable. The Durand Line, which separates Afghanistan and Pakistan, also splits the Pashtun ethnic group in half. The majority of Pashtuns therefore reject this argument. Hence, it is implausible that the Taliban will aid Pakistan in its struggle against the TTP. The Afghan Taliban are unlikely to alter their strategic calculus about TTP support. Despite the Taliban's unwavering strategic calculation in support of the TTP, its leadership appears to recognize the need of maintaining a working relationship with Pakistan or keeping tensions from escalating into a full-scale confrontation.

This growing threat from the TTP is just one more thing Pakistan has to deal with as the country struggles through a severe economic crisis and an ever-changing political scene. The broader concern is what action Pakistan will take toward the Afghan Taliban, who have provided a safe haven for the TTP.

Turkey Earthquake: Beyond a Natural Calamity

Maksuda Aktar Toma

Even though Turkey is far from the "ring of fire" in the Pacific that causes most of the world's strongest earthquakes, the area around it has a lot of quakes. In the history of Turkey, the 6th of February, 2023, was a period of widespread devastation. A 7.8-magnitude earthquake hit the central and southern parts of Turkey as well as the north and west of Syria. They have not witnessed such a powerful earthquake since the Erzincan earthquake of 1939. After 9 hours, a second significant earthquake with a magnitude of 7.5 struck the region, inflicting more serious damage and destroying damaged structures. Again, on February 20, a 6.4-magnitude quake near Hatay, and a 5.6-magnitude quake centered in Malatya on February 27 caused the collapse of numerous buildings and increased the death toll.



Turkey Earthquake

Source-NBC News

According to the most recent Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) announcement, 45,089 people were killed and 115,000 were injured. Turkey and Syria need help with housing and hospitals, restoring power, water, and sewage systems, and building more oil refineries, ports, railways, and highways. Also, it is very important that these countries' ambitious economic reform plans, which are being worked on hard even after the disaster and must be based on sustainable development, continue to get financial support. This is crucial in order to compensate for the significant economic losses caused by big disruptions. The World Health Organization's (WHO) director for Europe, Hans Kluge, said "relief workers are dealing with the worst natural disaster in the region in a century". He also said that 26 million people in both countries need help. WHO conducted the largest rescue mission in its 75-year history.

Syria is least equipped for such a disaster after 12 years of war and terrorism. Western sanctions continue to erode its infrastructure. Thousands of impacted persons are refugees. As a large country, Turkey has a significant capacity to handle natural emergencies but no matter what the capacity at hand, unfortunately, it was going to be insufficient to respond to this type of disaster. As Turkey approaches its May 14 presidential election, this year will be crucial. The election's outcome affects Turkey's population, economy, currency, and democracy. Erdogan's response to the disaster and potential calls to accountability for why so many buildings were unprepared for such shocks will now shape his political future. So, a natural calamity perhaps turns into a massive political change.

Tensions could rise in the worldwide competition for geopolitical, economic, and political hegemony. Turkey will get some relief from Western pressure on its NATO stance in the wake of the earthquakes, but not for long. According to Reuters, agricultural and light manufacturing sectors may be particularly hard hit by the earthquake in Turkey, which might cost the country up to 1% of its GDP this year. The potential long-term geological effects of the quake are only now becoming clear. Subsidence has caused flooding in the coastal city of Iskenderun, and the earthquake has put numerous hillsides at high risk of landslides elsewhere in the country. The mayor of Istanbul is warning that some 90,000 buildings could be at risk of collapsing if a major earthquake strikes Turkey's largest city.

Despite being a natural tragedy, there are certain human actions that largely contributed to the earthquake. These frequent earthquakes are exacerbated by human-made operations such as wastewater dumping, hydraulic fracturing sites, tunnel construction, implementing geothermal or fracking projects, nuclear bombings, and reservoir filling. As a human being it is now a matter of question that what should we do for the well-being of our future generation.