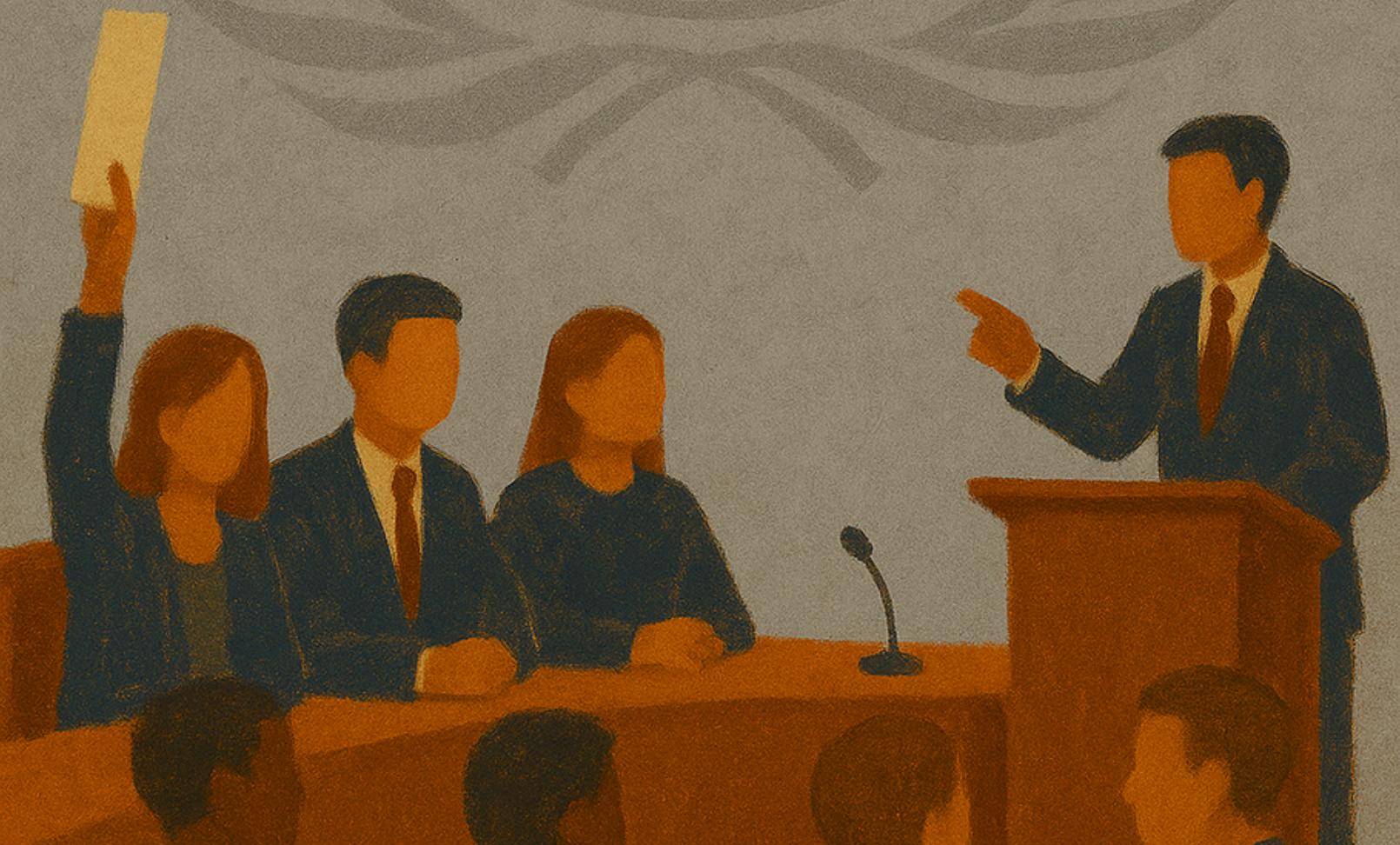


The World in Brief

September Edition





NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers,

We are excited to share this month's edition of The World in Brief. With exam season coming to a close, we hope this issue stands as a welcome pause for you all and a way to engage with the world beyond the classroom.

From the intertwining intricacies of ancient and modern democracies, to analysing the impact of tariffs, this edition brings together history, politics, and economics. We also explore the present, considering the challenges of democratic backsliding in Turkey and the ongoing protests in Nepal. Looking to the future, we turn our attention to the stakes of the modern space race, alongside a speculative “What If?” feature. Regardless, we hope you enjoy reading this edition as much as we enjoyed creating it.

Until October,
Aaditya Agarwal and Ansh Bhansali,
Editors-in-chief,
The World in Brief.





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TARIFFS AND TRADE DEALS

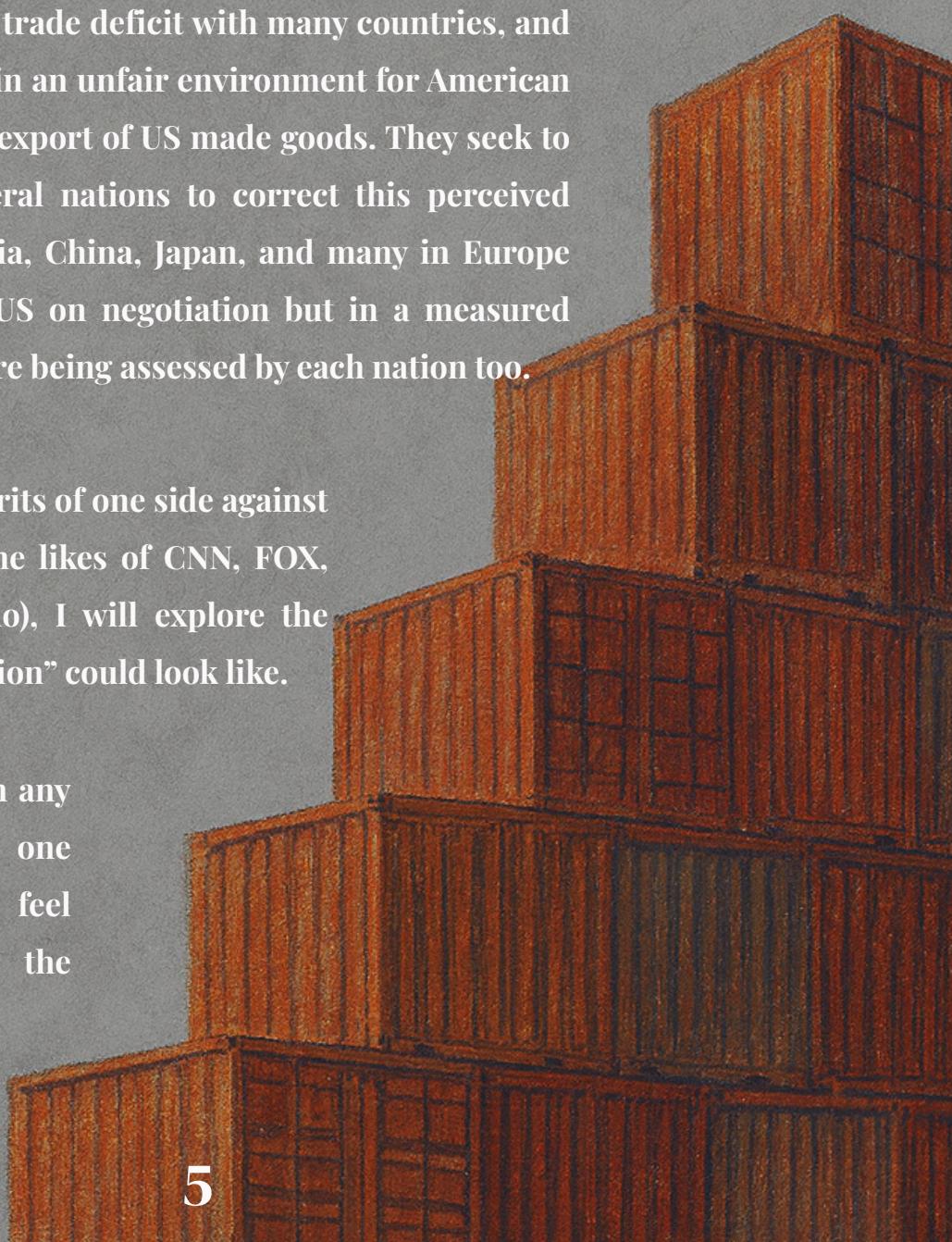
Ayesha Advani

We live in a global environment with increasing geopolitical tension, conflict and economic nationalism. Russia-Ukraine, Israel-Palestine, India-Pakistan, Thailand-Cambodia, all juxtaposed in an environment where trade and tariffs are used as tools of negotiation to achieve individual national priorities.

The United States runs a large trade deficit with many countries, and believes that this has resulted in an unfair environment for American manufacturing and the global export of US made goods. They seek to put reciprocal tariffs on several nations to correct this perceived imbalance. Countries like India, China, Japan, and many in Europe continue to engage with the US on negotiation but in a measured manner. Sector wise impacts are being assessed by each nation too.

Rather than opining on the merits of one side against another (I will leave that to the likes of CNN, FOX, NDTV, and Republic TV to do), I will explore the tenets of what a “good negotiation” could look like.

Simply put, a good outcome in any of these situations would be one where both negotiating sides feel sufficiently satisfied with the result. A “Win-Win”.





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A very well respected negotiator, Lakhdar Brahimi identified key aspects to consider: Patient relationship building, focussing on common ground, humility and active listening, and looking at situations holistically and not with a unidimensional lens. As a preparation all sides may also consider their ZOPA, or Zone of Possible Agreement, and BATNA, Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement, in case the negotiation fails.

One of the paradoxes of global trade is that nations often depend on their own partners, whom they contest with. For example, the United States and China remain deeply tied in supply chains despite their disputes in trade. This interdependence forces negotiators to remain cautious, as harming the contrasting side can backfire on them just as easily.

Tariffs cannot work miracles. Like any negotiation tool, they are not effective without limits. Overuse can trigger retaliation, inflation and ruin global supply chains. Trade wars are inevitable if we do not understand that the solution is about balance and foresight as much as it is about assertion.

With Trade being increasingly used to dominate National and Geopolitical outcomes, the use of the right approaches may help achieve the goals of peace, economic development and global growth.



ANCIENT VS. MODERN DEMOCRACIES

Pratham Shah



Overseas in ancient Greece, democracy was more overt. Athenian Ekklesia (assembly) permitted male citizens to engage in debates and to vote for policies. The Boule, a 500-member council, prepared bills and oversaw administration. This civic process enabled common citizens to directly shape governance. Despite being restricted by exclusion of women, slaves, and aliens, Greek councils were the first to establish the principle that authority results from collective decision-making, the foundation of contemporary parliamentary democracy.

One of the great epics of India, the Mahabharata is also full of materials that take account for justice, politics, and diplomacy. The "Sabella Parva" describes that the monarchs would consult their advisors, elders, and ministers on advice councils before taking significant decisions. The ideal monarch, Yudhishthira, was advised to demonstrate leadership that is modest, fair, and affable and that takes account of the judgment of others' views with proper respect. With a focus on discourse rather than dominance, available in the Decision making councils revealed normative maxims of moral responsibility and discourse, which were indicative of democratic ideals.



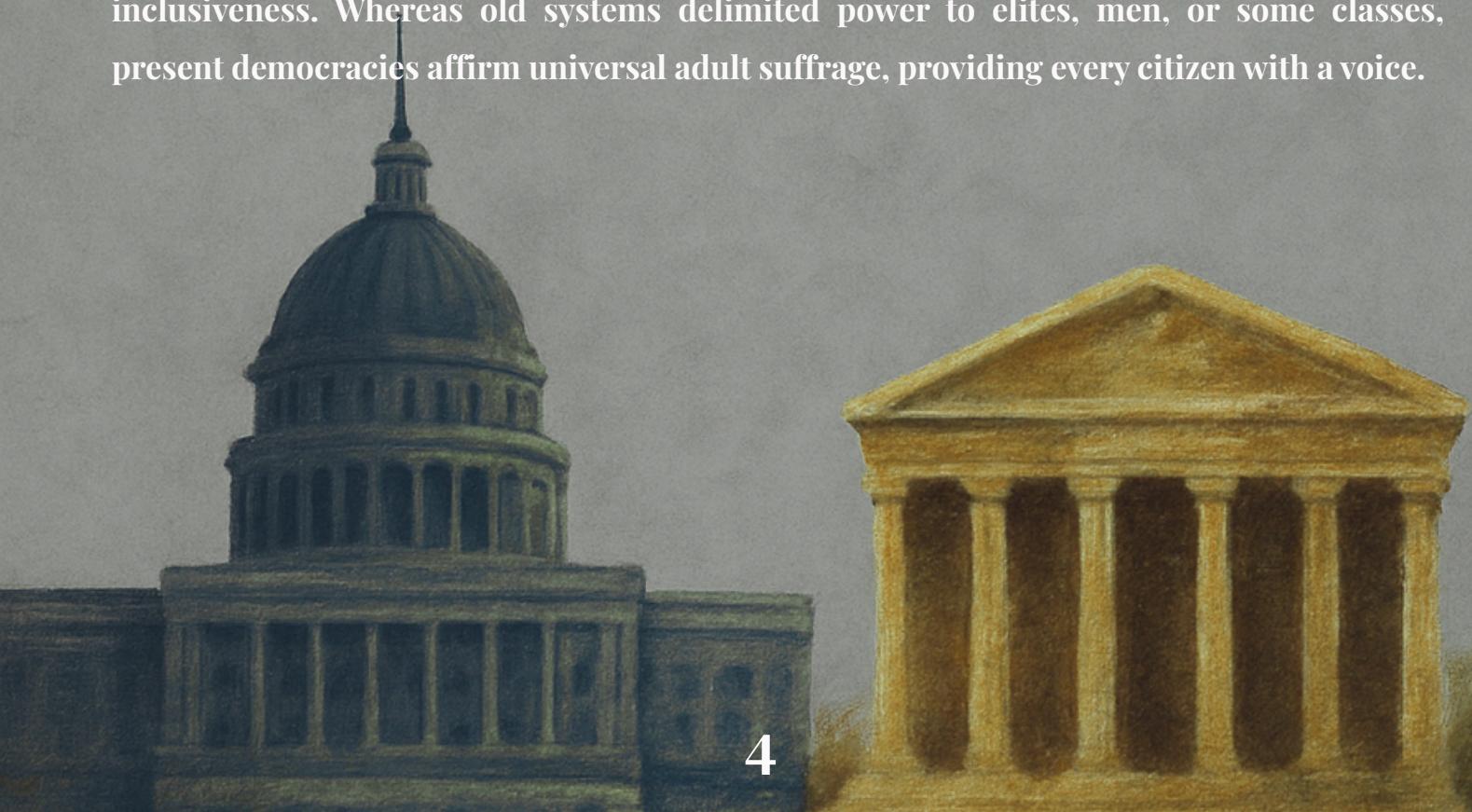


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Rome also put into place a system that distributed powers between various bodies of government. The Roman Senate, composed of aristocratic elders, advised consuls and ultimately emperors. Although it lacked the direct representation of the masses, it did have representation of continuing, reflective, and collective responsibility in government administration. Comitia (popular assemblies) except the Senate also had citizens vote on the election of magistrates and enacting laws, which combined the elite leadership and popular sanctioning. Rome's practice soon formed European political practices, where the advisory councils ultimately took the role of the legislative houses.

Modern parliamentary systems inherit these old practices. The participatory bodies outlined in the Mahabharata echo today's parliamentary debates, where leaders have to defend their policies to elected legislators. The Greek councils' tradition of participation continues in the right to vote and the role of the opposition parties in law-making. The Roman Senate tradition is carried on by bicameral legislatures, where the upper house provides stability and the lower house represents the voice of the people. The transition From Ancient Councils to Present Parliaments also reflects an increasing dedication to inclusiveness. Whereas old systems delimited power to elites, men, or some classes, present democracies affirm universal adult suffrage, providing every citizen with a voice.





FROM HASHTAGS TO HEADLINES

Alyssa Vora

Nepal has been rocked by a dramatic political upheaval this September. What began as protests over a controversial social-media ban escalated rapidly into widespread anger over corruption, political nepotism, and economic stagnation. Young people were at the forefront, pouring into the streets under slogans like ‘accountability now’ and ‘our voices matter.’ When security forces responded with live ammunition and weaponry, tragedy followed: dozens died; many more were injured; and government buildings, including the Parliament, were torched.

The tipping point came when Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli, under pressure both from protesters and political opponents, resigned. The parliament was dissolved shortly thereafter. An interim government was formed with Sushila Karki, former Chief Justice, as Prime Minister, the first woman to lead Nepal.





Now comes the hard part: what happens next. On one hand, this shows how frustrated many Nepalis are, young people especially, with a system that rewards those in power while leaving the majority struggling with unemployment and weak public services. On the other hand, there are real risks. When institutions are pushed aside, there is a danger that constitutional norms will be eroded. There is also the question of whether protests can translate into long-term change rather than simply replacing one governing elite with another.

Geopolitically, this crisis matters beyond its borders. Nepal sits between India and China and has to balance influence from both. This democratic rupture sends strong signals to regional governments and the international community. Additionally, the role of digital tools, social media, messaging apps, and online organising shows how modern protest movements can gather strength fast, but also how fragile they are when governments cut them off. For Nepal itself, the challenge is to manage the transition well: hold fair elections, restore trust in democratic institutions, and ensure that this moment of upheaval becomes one of reform rather than a relapse into old problems.



THE MODERN SPACE RACE

Veer Bhansali

The mid-20th-century space race was a contest between the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. It peaked with achievements like Yuri Gagarin's first orbit of Earth and the Apollo 11 Moon landing. Now, over fifty years later, this race has entered a new phase. Today's space race includes nations like India, China, and Japan, as well as private companies.



The United States and Russia are still key players, but China, India, Japan, and the EU have established strong roles in space exploration. China has become a strong competitor, successfully completing lunar missions, building its own Tiangong space station, and planning crewed Moon landings. India has also made commendable achievements, with the Chandrayaan-3 mission landing on the Moon's south pole in 2023, a feat no other nation had achieved until now. NASA is focused on its Artemis program, aiming to send astronauts back to the Moon and create a sustainable environment there. This new race entails countries with bigger objectives, including technological advancement, resource extraction, and the possibility of life on other planets.

The most noticeable change between the old and new space race is private companies. SpaceX, Blue Origin, and others are changing access to orbit by reducing launch costs and developing new rocket technology. SpaceX's Starship is designed for deep-space missions and can transport humans to Mars. These companies have made space exploration more affordable and accessible as people like Elon Musk plan to lower costs further.

The Moon has become a primary target for many nations involved in space exploration. Its resources like water ice that can be turned into rocket fuel, make it a promising basis for future missions. The Artemis Accords, which have been signed by over 30 countries, aim to create a cooperative framework for lunar exploration, though not all nations agree with their terms. China and Russia are collaborating on an alternative International Lunar Research Station. Mars remains the long-term goal, with NASA, SpaceX, and China planning crewed missions. Robotic explorers like NASA's Perseverance rover are already examining the Martian surface for signs of ancient life.



The present space race raises difficult questions. Who owns space resources? What is a fair way to govern space? Conflict could arise from the threats of militarization and competition for orbital territory. In the upcoming years, stopping the colonization of space will become a big challenge, however, its exploration will not end. In the current space race, competition between countries and companies has replaced rivalry. This race promises to be a continuous journey, regardless of whether it promotes cooperation or conflict.



DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING IN TURKEY

Naasha Mahadevia

Over the last two decades, Turkey has experienced one of the most striking examples of democratic backsliding in the world. Turkey, which was once praised as a model of Muslim-majority democracy bridging the gap between Europe and the Middle East, is now under an authoritarian form of government. The slow erosion of democracy can be closely tied to the Justice and Development Party (AKP) under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has weakened political institutions, civil society, and the media.



The weakening of checks and balances was one of the first signs of democratic decline by the party. When the AKP first came to power in 2002, it introduced reforms that aligned Turkey more closely with European Union standards by expanding civil liberties, reducing the military's influence in politics, and enhancing minority rights. This economic growth and stability helped legitimise AKP as a party; however, this gave way to the consolidation of power.

The 2010 constitutional referendum expanded government influence over the judiciary heavily. AKP started cracking down on the media; with journalists and outlets facing intimidation and closures, resulting in a loss of press freedom. During the 2013 corruption scandal, where senior AKP officials were implicated, the government ensured the investigation was framed as a 'judicial coup' orchestrated by the Gülen movement, clearing all officials from any charges.

However, the true turning point towards authoritarianism was the failed coup in 2016, where a faction of the Turkish army attempted to overthrow the government to restore democracy, claiming that Erdogan was undermining the constitution. However, he was able to escape and end the coup. In response, the government declared a state of emergency for two years. Under emergency decrees, the government bypassed the parliament and expanded executive authority to unprecedented levels. More than 100,000 public servants were dismissed, journalists and scholars were imprisoned, and opposing voices were immediately silenced.

The constitutional referendum in 2017 only acted as a continuation of 2016's events. It replaced the parliamentary system with an executive presidency, which gave the president power to issue decrees with the force of law, allowed him to appoint judges and dissolve the parliament.

Since then, freedom of expression and political participation have eroded. Independent journalism has diminished, with Turkey called the world's leading jailer of journalists. Social media is heavily censored, and elections lack fairness, as the ruling party holds disproportionate power. The main opposition, the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), faces imprisonment on politically motivated terrorism charges. Yet opposition successes in Istanbul and Ankara during the 2019 municipal elections allow a slight hint of hope to persevere.



WHAT IF?

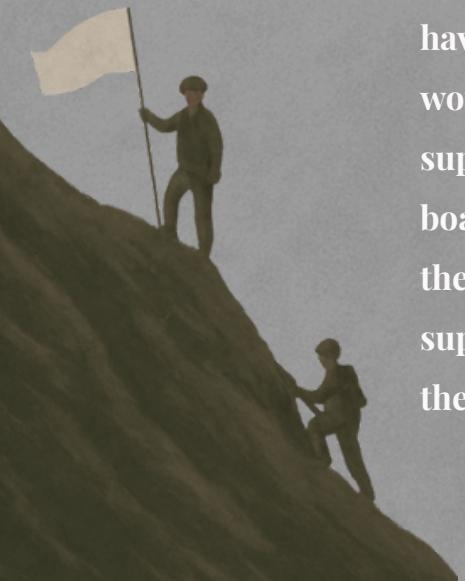
Vanika Bubna

Our world today is characterised by so many events, that it seems impossible to imagine life without them. But if we stop to think, what would have happened had World War 2 played out differently? What would have happened if the USSR was still intact? What would happen if India was still under British colonial rule?



Imagine a world where the USSR has not been dissolved, a world where all 15 Soviet Socialist Republics were still tied under Moscow's oppressive regime. Maybe they would have worked something out, maybe they would have adopted a liberal approach to bridge the gaps between the Republics. The biggest impact would be that the Russia-Ukraine war would not take place. Ukraine would still be under the USSR, preventing the two from fighting and saving thousands of lives. Had some sort of agreement been worked out in the 1990s, which kept the USSR together, so many lives of the present would have been saved.

Secondly, what if Japan had been more strategic at Pearl Harbour, extending their attacks to the western mainland? USA's lifeline would have been severed, being militarily passive for the next few decades. This would have taken a toll on their emergence as a superpower. Without US supplies, the allies might have never defeated the axis powers. The entire board would have been flipped. Japan and Germany would be on top, and the USSR may have defeated them unilaterally, emerging as the leading superpower, with the US trailing far behind. However, most importantly, the cold war would have never occurred.

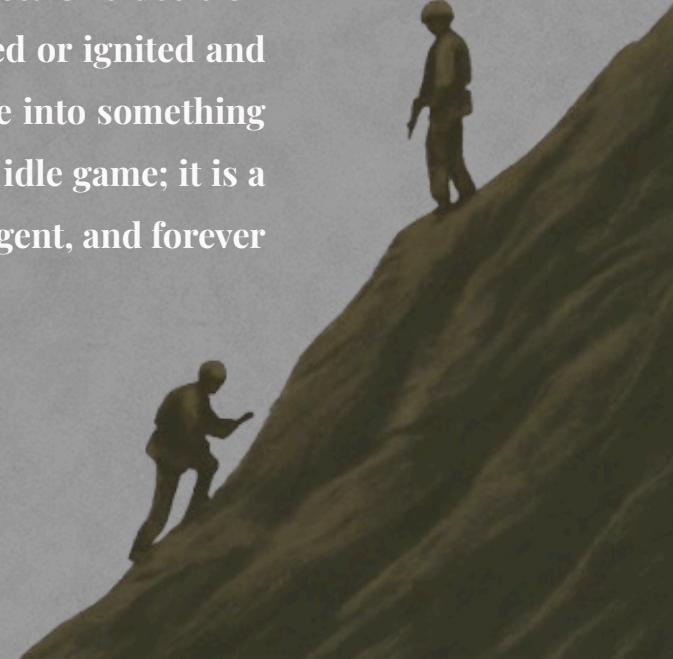




What if the revolt of 1857 and the Quit India movement of 1942 never happened, and India was still under colonial rule? Would we have the freedom to express our thoughts like we are in the present? Our rights would be suppressed, the technological boom would have never happened, we'd be trapped in poverty and our lives would be neglected. On a more political note, China would emerge as the sole superpower in Asia, and it's time at the top would be uncontested. A larger impact would be that Pakistan and Bangladesh wouldn't even exist. Pakistan was created out of concerns of a Hindu-dominant independent India, however, if India was never given freedom, religious tensions would have plateaued, or grown at a smaller scale. The question of Bangladesh's existence also depends on Pakistan and their political problems, and in a case where Pakistan doesn't exist, neither would Bangladesh. Wars like Kargil and 1971 would also never have happened, and the Indo-Pakistani rivalry would never have been.

These are just three of the pivotal events that shaped the world. There are countless such events, and the alternative possibilities are endless. All it takes is one simple question, "What If?"

History, then, is less a fixed sequence of inevitabilities and more a delicate web of choices, accidents, and contingencies. One decision altered, one battle turned, one revolution suppressed or ignited and the entire architecture of our present could collapse into something unrecognisable. To wonder "what if?" is not just an idle game; it is a reminder that the world we inhabit is fragile, contingent, and forever perched on the edge of possibility.





WHAT TYPE OF MUN DELEGATE ARE YOU?

Jia Laud

1. Gavel drops. What do you do?

- a) Raise your placard. The first speech is yours.
- b) Sit at the back and open social media.
- c) Crack a joke to the person next to you.
- d) Already typing clauses before roll call.

6. Midnight before Day 3 you're...

- a) Trying to write as many clauses as possible.
- b) Sketching a map of who's allying with who.
- c) Intensively lobbying.
- d) Fighting for author/co-author.

2. Someone takes a shot at your country.

- a) Swing back harder. Make them think twice.
- b) Stay calm.
- c) Smile, shrug, attempt to charm the EB.
- d) Quote UN Charter violations.

4. How does your research look?

- a) Short and concise.
- b) Purely AI research.
- c) No research, all brain.
- d) Long paragraphs of text.

3. You get hit with a tough POI.

- a) Roast the delegate in committee.
- b) Smooth pivot, redirect to your message.
- c) Go straight to the point. Prove them wrong.
- d) Answer via chit. (shame!)

5. Crisis update!

- a) Grab the mic.
- b) Raise a motion for an open floor.
- c) Spin it into an opportunity, victimise yourself.
- d) Start rewriting resolutions.

Mostly A's: You're here to dominate, so it doesn't matter if you're extra. First speeches, aggressive POIs, and a commanding presence. Half of the room secretly wishes they were you, the other finds you terrifying.

Mostly B's: Despite your limited speech and movement, you manage to remain dangerous. You go unnoticed until voting, when your one silent action ruins the strategy of another bloc. Quiet, cunning, and efficient.

Mostly C's: An Eskimo might buy ice from you. You are well-known, your jokes are hilarious, and you manage to maintain five alliances at once. People still sign your DR because they like you, even if your draft is poor.

Mostly D's: You have actually read the Charter, are familiar with procedure, and you have essentially written all of the important clauses. Blocs rely on you, chairs adore you, and committee would fail without you.

