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THE FOURTH ESTATE

PRE-CONFERENCE ISSUE

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Artwork Featured-

Anannya Garg, Divisha Jain, Maahira Agarwal, Aditri Jain, Renaya Mehta

Convoluted Conflict

Ahaan Dhawan gives his take on the Israel-Palestine conflict

The Israel-Palestine conflict was at its worst in 2021. What started with clashes in a single neighbourhood in East Jerusalem had quickly escalated to deadly violence. Israeli authorities launched airstrikes on Gaza while the militant group Hamas countered by firing rockets at several Israeli cities. As a result of the violence, at least 256 Palestinians, including 66 children, have been killed. In Israel, at least 13 people have been killed, including two children.

So is there any solution to this 70- yearlong conflict between Israel and Palestine?

Now there are two realistic solutions to which this conflict might end. The “two-state solution” would establish an independent Israel and Palestine and is the conventional approach to resolving the conflict. Israelis want a Jewish state, and Palestinians want a Palestinian one, both wanting to run their countries individually. The “one-state solution” would merge Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip into one big country. Since neither side is willing to agree to a joined state, the only possible solution that satisfies everyone involves separating Palestinians and Israelis.

The two-state solution, if adopted, would provide a security blanket to the people of both Israel and Palestine. For Israel, it could mean an end to continuous worry of a full-blown takeover of the West Bank by Hamas, and for Palestine, it could end foreign military occupation. This argument why the Two-state solution is perhaps, the most ideal and secure future for both.

The Afghan Exodus

Aryaman Dev sheds light upon the refugee crisis due to the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan

On April 14th 2021, it was formally announced by the President of the United States of America, Joe Biden, that the American troops stationed in Afghanistan would be withdrawn by September 11th of the same year. This manoeuvre aspires to end the longest war ever fought in the United States' history.

The decision also, however, led to large numbers of Afghans fleeing from their country, mostly to Iran and Pakistan and Turkey, marking the beginning of a major refugee crisis as the Taliban claimed more and more land.

Those seeking refuge in Iran and Turkey are at a constant risk of being one of the tens of thousands of people deported back to Afghanistan against their will each year.

To make matters even worse, a law that permits the imprisonment of illegal migrants for long periods has recently been proposed in Iran and could potentially allow open shooting on cars and other vehicles if they are suspected of carrying illegal migrants.

This year alone, nearly 300 thousand Afghans have been displaced, mainly due to the increasing amounts of violence in the country. Despite the UNHCR's efforts to provide the refugees with shelter, food, water, and other necessities, the situation is becoming increasingly dire.



Art By Divisha Jain

US Pulling Out of the Middle East

Aaliyah Bawa analyses the US Pulling out of the Middle East

On June 18, 2021, the Wall Street Journal reported that the United States is preparing to pull some of its forces and anti-missile systems from the Middle East in a major realignment of its military footprint there as it adjusts to the end of the war in Afghanistan and focuses its armed forces on threats from China and Russia. The report also stated that the Pentagon will withdraw some troops, fighter squadrons and about eight Patriot batteries from Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other nations, as well as a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system from Saudi Arabia. Some of these defense systems will return to the US for maintenance while others will be redeployed to other regions.

This comes as President Joe Biden's administration seeks to ease tensions with Iran after they intensified in 2019; when the US deployed Patriot anti-missile batteries and troops to Saudi Arabia after Iranian drone attacks hit Saudi oil facilities, and to Iraq in 2020 after missile and rocket attacks on US forces at the Ain al-Assad base in Iraq by Iran and Iranian-backed militias in retaliation to the US killing of top Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani in a drone strike at the Baghdad airport. The Biden administration seeks to de-escalate tensions in the Middle East and is focused on negotiations over re-entering a revised version of the 2015 international nuclear agreement with Iran, which former President Donald Trump had unilaterally withdrawn from in 2018.

President Biden seems to have found a rare common ground with former President Trump, who had ordered a drawdown from Iraq as well as Afghanistan in his final months to bring an end to the seemingly 'endless wars'. Withdrawing its troops from Iraq means the United States will be unable to prevent an outbreak of sectarian violence between the Sunni and Shia majority countries. It may also lead to a power struggle in the middle east with Iran attempting to increase its area of control. The pulling of US defense forces, however, is not complete and leaves open the possibility of the return of the US to the middle east.

Should We Veto the Veto?

Devina Gupta expounds the various domains of the veto power

The five permanent members of the UNSC: China, Russia, the United States of America (USA), France and the United Kingdom (UK), have the power to refuse any disadvantageous resolutions, to them or their allies, according to their right to veto. Yet, it is believed that the UNSC cannot thrive, or serve its purpose without the existence of the controversial veto.

How important is it to refute this faculty, and how important is it to retain it? If we let the power remain, what will the consequences be, and if we strike it, is the outcome favourable? To answer these questions, we must understand a few conditions of the 'veto'. Regardless of the brevity of a resolution, or how grave the resolution must be to disintegrate a conflict, the veto power can be utilised.

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Art By Anannya Garg

This power might be the most significant distinction between permanent and non-permanent UNSC members. What does this do for the fairness of the power? A major aspect of a democratic organisation such as the UNSC is its notion and execution of equality amongst members. Article 2 itself of the UN charter could be summarised as "the United Nations are based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its members". By comprehension, this should mean that all nations must be given equal power and equivocal importance. To give a few countries the capability to overrule any resolution, regardless of the vote of the majority is a blatant disregard for democracy. This lack of egalitarianism leads to the Permanent Members manipulating decisions concerning global conflicts to their suiting and likings. A case of the veto subverting underdeveloped nations and states to suit its likings is Africa. Underdeveloped or developing countries have a lesser impact on global situations, depriving and withholding their opportunities for advancement and international support.

This leaves the country to direct their resources to procure firearms as a defence in case conflict arises instead of investing them into their development and growth. This increases global security threats and defers the original efforts of the UNSC entirely.

It is argued that the veto power is necessary for the maintenance of the Council. The UNSC is funded by the bodies that are a part of it. This inherently means they possess the responsibility of maintaining international peace. The veto power keeps the funding Members together, and was established to assure their capability and continuity in financing the UNSC. However, the despotic and tyrannical means of achieving this bond by giving these countries the power over others to exercise their own benefits, is contemptuous and must be reconsidered.

Refugees Crisis in Afghanistan

Krish Grover describes the impact of the US pulling out of Afghanistan

Afghan refugees represent one of the world's largest refugee populations. Ever since the Russian War in the 1980s and the insurgence of terrorism, Afghans have been forcefully displaced to never see their homes again.

Till now the neighbouring countries of Iran, Pakistan and several other European countries have opted to provide refuge to the Afghans. However, after the withdrawal of US forces by President Biden and the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan, many Afghans are looking for security yet again. The conference this week in Tashkent will decide which countries would be able to provide asylum to the Afghans. However, most European countries, Pakistan and Iran are already overburdened with refugees from Afghanistan and Syria, as well COVID-19 consequences.

There have been instances where refugees have not been granted asylum in Europe. This could result in a full-blown, humanitarian crisis. To tackle this, international agencies and Afghanistan must cooperate to create a robust framework for upholding human rights. Clearly the situation in Afghanistan once again poses a complex challenge for not only the country but the entire world.



Art By Maahira Agarwal

To Veto or Not to Veto

Aashna Nayyar examines the ongoing debate on the five permanent members of the UNSC exercising the power to veto

The destruction and terror which followed the Second World War shook the whole world to its core. After this devastating period of global genocide in 1945, to eliminate the chances of a repeat of the war 51 countries came together and created the UN. This organisation is committed to maintaining global harmony, friendly relations between countries as well as promoting social advancement, better living standards and human rights.

The UNSC (the council in charge of ensuring international peace and security) consists of fifteen members, out of which five are permanent members and ten are non-permanent members who are elected each year by the general assembly for a two year term. Since the organisation was created in the wake of WW2, the five permanent members were chosen on the basis of their importance in the aftermath of WW2. The 5 permanent members with veto power are China, Russia, France, the United Kingdom and the United States. Article 27 (3) of the UN charter states that a concrete decision of the council must be made with concurring votes of the permanent members. This means that the permanent members have the power to veto a resolution. Hence, if the veto is used, the resolution is not passed. This and the fact that these countries have permanent seats gives them more power in decision making compared to other countries.

The council may come up with a collective solution for a crisis, but that can be vetoed if any of the five permanent members are not in agreement; this can also lead to a major humanitarian crisis. An example of this can be when China and Russia vetoed the one year extension deal allowing aid deliveries to north-western Syria. Another example can be Russia vetoing a resolution condemning the shooting of a Korea Airlines flight by the USSR. Permanent members can use their veto powers to promote political self-interest or geopolitical interest.

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On the other hand, the veto power can also allow the members to set aside issues they disagree on and stay engaged on the cases they agree on. Many also believe that the veto power is a promoter of international stability.

To summarise, the debate on the veto powers is an ongoing one with a substantial number of supporters as well as critics. However, there are no indications of a change in the current dynamics concerning the exercise of the power to veto in the UNSC.

Geopolitics in the Middle East

Vivaan Bajoria analyses geopolitical affairs between the US and the Middle East

The president of the United States of America, Joe Biden, is ending the longest war the USA has ever encountered. They have pulled out anti-missile batteries from 4 Middle Eastern countries including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait and Jordan. They have also removed a Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system from Saudi Arabia that had been deployed by the previous cabinet of Donald Trump.

Thousands of troops were made to come back to the US, ending the country's longest war. All troops in the Middle Eastern countries will be out of the Middle East by September 11, 2021. 3000 Troops from the USA will go back home after their long stint in Afghanistan. The US government promises them a safe and responsible exit from the war-torn country.

Wildlife Trafficking - India Focus

Jaisal Singh Khurana Comments On Wildlife Trafficking



Art By Nayantara Singh

The issue in India does not lie in its regulations but in the poor implementation and enforcement of the rules. Furthermore, there is a lack of political will and governance. An analysis by TRAFFIC India Director Dr Saket Badola, published in July 2020, reported that poaching incidences for consumption and local trade have more than doubled during the COVID-19 lockdown. Moreover, the illegal trade has increasingly begun using air transportation resulting in authorities more closely monitoring airports. Expertise and action are required to control the legal wildlife trade and reduce the illegal wildlife trade that endangers species, bringing them to the very brink of extinction.

Wildlife trafficking in India adversely impacts the country's natural resources and local communities. Despite India's strong legal and policy framework to regulate and restrict the wildlife trade, it still thrives, according to WWF India. India ranks among the top 20 nations in the illegal wildlife trade, according to TRAFFIC (Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce).

The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 prohibits the trade of over 1800 species of wild animals, plants, and their products.

Additionally, India is a member of the CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora).

A STORY OF SUFFERING

Ishaan Jain documents the refugee crisis in Afghanistan

Many say Afghanistan's location, right in the heart of Asia is its biggest curse and this statement might not be entirely inaccurate. Throughout recorded history, the country has been at the centre of one conflict or the other – from the days of the invasions of Darius and Alexander the Great to the contemporary insurgence of terrorism, Afghanistan has always been the hotbed of conflict.

The Afghan citizens have suffered a long history of displacement, which picked up drastically with the Soviet invasion of 1979. The UNHRC reported 270,000 Afghans have been displaced since January 2021 due to violence. This brings the total uprooted population to over 3.5 million. Today there are 3 generations at risk with 65% of the Afghan population being children or young adults. Iran and Pakistan host almost 90% of displaced Afghans – more than 2 million registered refugees in total. The others have found refuge in the EU and other regions.

People now fear the resurgence of the Taliban with US President Joe Biden calling the move to pull out of Afghanistan by September 11th 2021. Refugees are looking to seek refuge in Greece, Turkey and other EU countries due to a lack of socio-economic factors in Iran and Pakistan. Yet, the countries providing asylum are closing their borders due to a lack of financial aid. Iran even implemented a draft in 2020 targeting undocumented Afghans. Many undocumented refugees thus face the constant threat of deportation.

The situation further escalated during the COVID-19 pandemic. By 2019, Afghan arrivals to the EU had increased again and by early 2020, they were the largest group among all sea arrivals to Greece before the numbers declined again due to the pandemic restrictions. Asylum providing countries face their own socio-economic and medical crises due to the pandemic and may be overburdened with the influx of refugees. A very large humanitarian crisis is imminent which may lead to geopolitical clashes. While President Biden wants out of Afghanistan, the crisis is global.

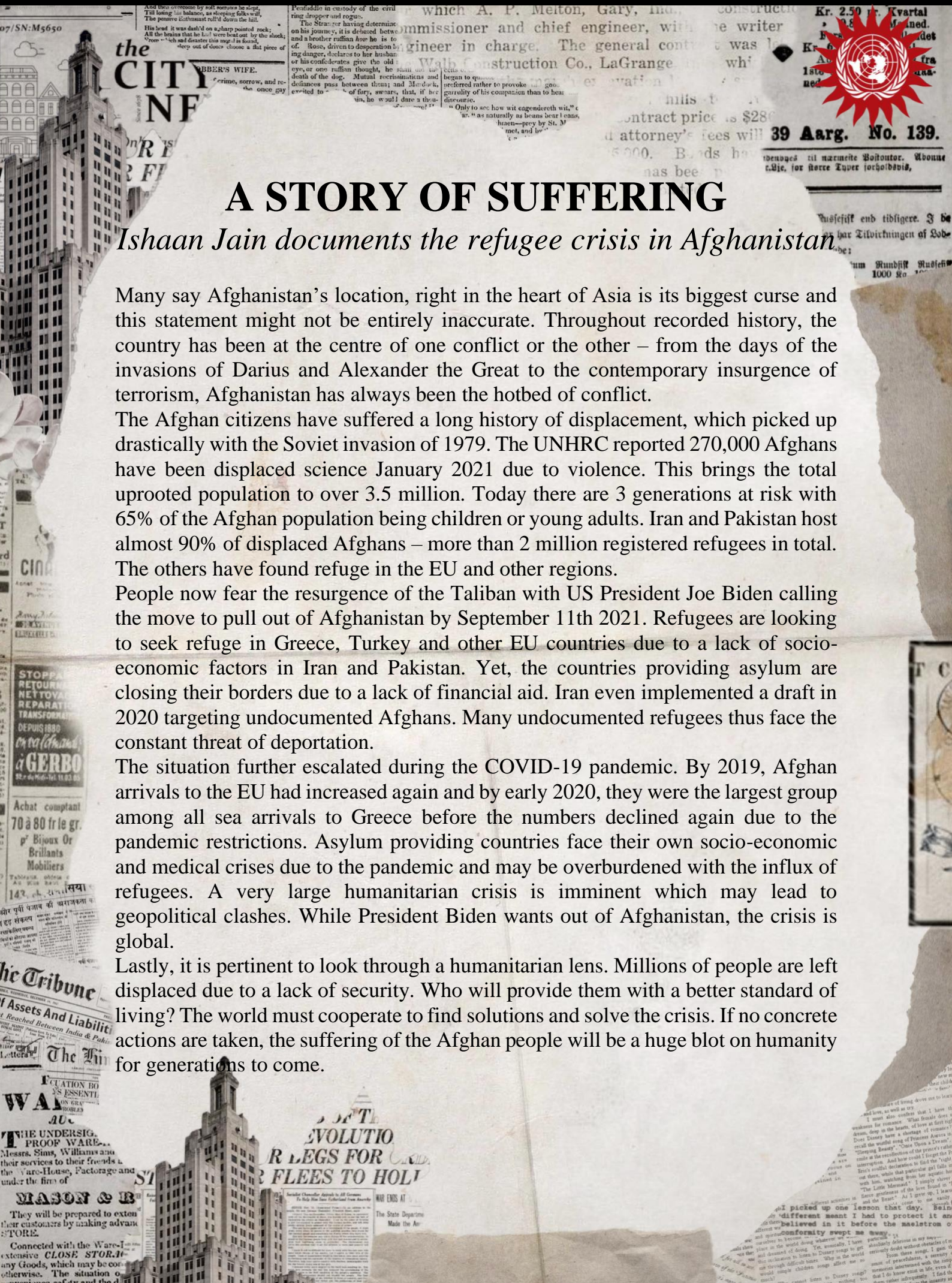
Lastly, it is pertinent to look through a humanitarian lens. Millions of people are left displaced due to a lack of security. Who will provide them with a better standard of living? The world must cooperate to find solutions and solve the crisis. If no concrete actions are taken, the suffering of the Afghan people will be a huge blot on humanity for generations to come.



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Art By Aditri Jain

A two-state solution would mean the recognition of two states: Israel and Palestine, situated adjacent to each other. Palestine would be located in the Gaza Strip while Jerusalem would be the capital of both states. All Palestinian refugees would be permitted to relocate to the State of Palestine. The hindrance with this issue is Israel's reluctance to agree, as they claim the land as theirs. Additionally, if the land is given to Palestinians, the Israelis living there would have to be evicted. Both Israel and Palestine will fight for the land that they claim is rightfully theirs, meaning there is still a long way to resolve this complicated and persistent conflict.

An End to our Ecosystem

Aanya Krishna details the impact of wildlife trafficking in India

Over the years, illegal wildlife trafficking has threatened the existence of various plant and animal species across the globe. Today, it is one of the most profitable, illicit trades in the world. The estimated value of the illegal wildlife trade, worldwide is around \$7- \$23 billion per year.

In India, trade in approximately 1800 different species of plants and animals is strictly banned under The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Despite this, thousands of wildlife trafficking incidents have been recorded over the past ten years. According to reports, the global wildlife trade has increased 500 per cent in value since 2005. Studies reveal that in India a large number of wildlife trafficking crimes take place due to superstitions and myths. Several wild species are traded under these preconceived notions and sold as false remedies for a multitude of illnesses that lack scientific evidence.

The problem, globally as well as in India, is largely due to the poor enforcement of these laws and due to the fact that the penalty for most of these crimes is negligible. Wildlife trafficking has an alarming effect on the ecosystem too. There is an urgent need to act immediately and bring wildlife trade within sustainable levels, expressly.

Afghan Refugee Crisis Staring at the World Again

Kashvi Kaul examines the repercussions of the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan

The Afghan refugee crisis is staring at the world once again. In February 2020, President Trump and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) allies agreed to formulate a deal with the Taliban. The deal set the deadline for the complete withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan by May 1, 2021. However, current United States of America (US) President Joe Biden has stated that all US troops will be withdrawn from Afghanistan by September 11, 2021.

Over the past seven months an estimated 270,000 Afghans have been displaced in their country, primarily due to the rising tension and violence that has erupted. Reports suggest Afghan citizens deemed to be either working or associating with the government and similar international organisations, are being targeted by non-state armed groups such as the Taliban. The threat to their lives and increase in insecurities has caused many families to flee their country and find refuge elsewhere. Neighbouring countries such as Pakistan have already closed their borders, leaving the displaced Afghans in need of humanitarian aid.

The prolonged crisis over the last several decades has made refugees from Afghanistan the largest in the world, peaking to about 6.2 million Afghans seeking refuge in other countries. The recent developments in Afghanistan are clear indications that the humanitarian crisis is only going to escalate with the exit of US troops from Afghan soil.

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The Veto Dilemma

Divija Jain evaluates the undemocratic veto power of the permanent members in the UNSC

The UN's Security Council's "Veto power" refers to the power of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) to veto or discard any substantive resolution. The veto power is highly controversial, with a lot of supporters and a lot of critics.

The veto power was the result of heated discussions during the formation of the United Nations in 1944. The United States, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, and China all enforced the principle of unanimity, not only because it promotes global stability and restricts military interventions, but also because the veto power allows these nations to protect their sovereignty and national interests. President Truman of the USA wrote, "All our experts, civil and military, favoured it, and without such a veto, no arrangement would have passed the Senate." Without the veto power ensuring that the largest contributing members of the UN Security Council will not be harmed economically, these countries will be unable to fund or assist the UN in helping undeveloped countries.

It is however, extremely clear that the veto power is a clear disregard of democracy. Article 2 of the UN states that all members are equal. If this is the case, why do the "Big 5" have more influence on UN resolutions than the other members? They can use their veto to manipulate resolutions to suit their country's interests, delaying any action taken by the UN. For example, Russia and China have vetoed any UN intervention in the Syrian war as they benefit economically from it.

Even though the Big 5 hold indisputable power, if the veto power must remain, other countries specially, countries with growing economies and developing countries that need economic support should be given this right as well. Additionally, countries who can veto resolutions should not be permitted to do so in conflicts they are involved in, or benefit from, as their opinions would be biased, going against the purpose of the UN to maintain world peace.



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The Illegal Wildlife Trade-Game In India

Mughda Dash explains the causes and consequences of wildlife trade in India

Wildlife trafficking is the trade of prohibited animals and plants. It endangers and causes harm to various species of wildlife. This is illegal and prohibited in various countries across the globe.

Some of the most trafficked wildlife in India are- elephant tusks, leopard/tiger skins, rhino horns, pangolin, Tokay geckos, etc. Wildlife trafficking impacts various sectors of society causing mass-extinction, in turn impacting humans.

India's wildlife trafficking is at an all-time high like the rest of the world, posing a threat to many species of rare animals that fall prey to heartless poachers. India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 prohibits trafficking of over 1800 species of plants and animals. The Wildlife Trust of India, formed in 1998, is an organization that is actively working towards saving endangered wildlife and reducing the cases of illegal wildlife trade in India. Despite Government implementation of regulations, the caseloads are still high due to poor enforcement. Animal trafficking and smuggling is an ongoing, heart-breaking menace.

There is an express need to spread awareness amongst the public to counter this threat. Stronger enforcement of laws and Government advocacy must be executed.



Art By Renaya Mehta

The International Press

JOURNALISTS

Aaliyah Bawa
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The Stranger having determined on his journey, it is debated between him and a brother ruffian how he is to proceed. Rose, driven to desperation by the danger, declares to her husband that she will do anything to save him, and his confederates give the old man a look of contempt. The old man, eyeing one of the ruffians, thought, the death of the dog. Mutual recriminations pass between them; a heated dispute of fury, sword,

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Assets And Liabilities Reached Between India & Pakistan

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